Shojo Beat Manga

BABY & Me™

Story & Art by

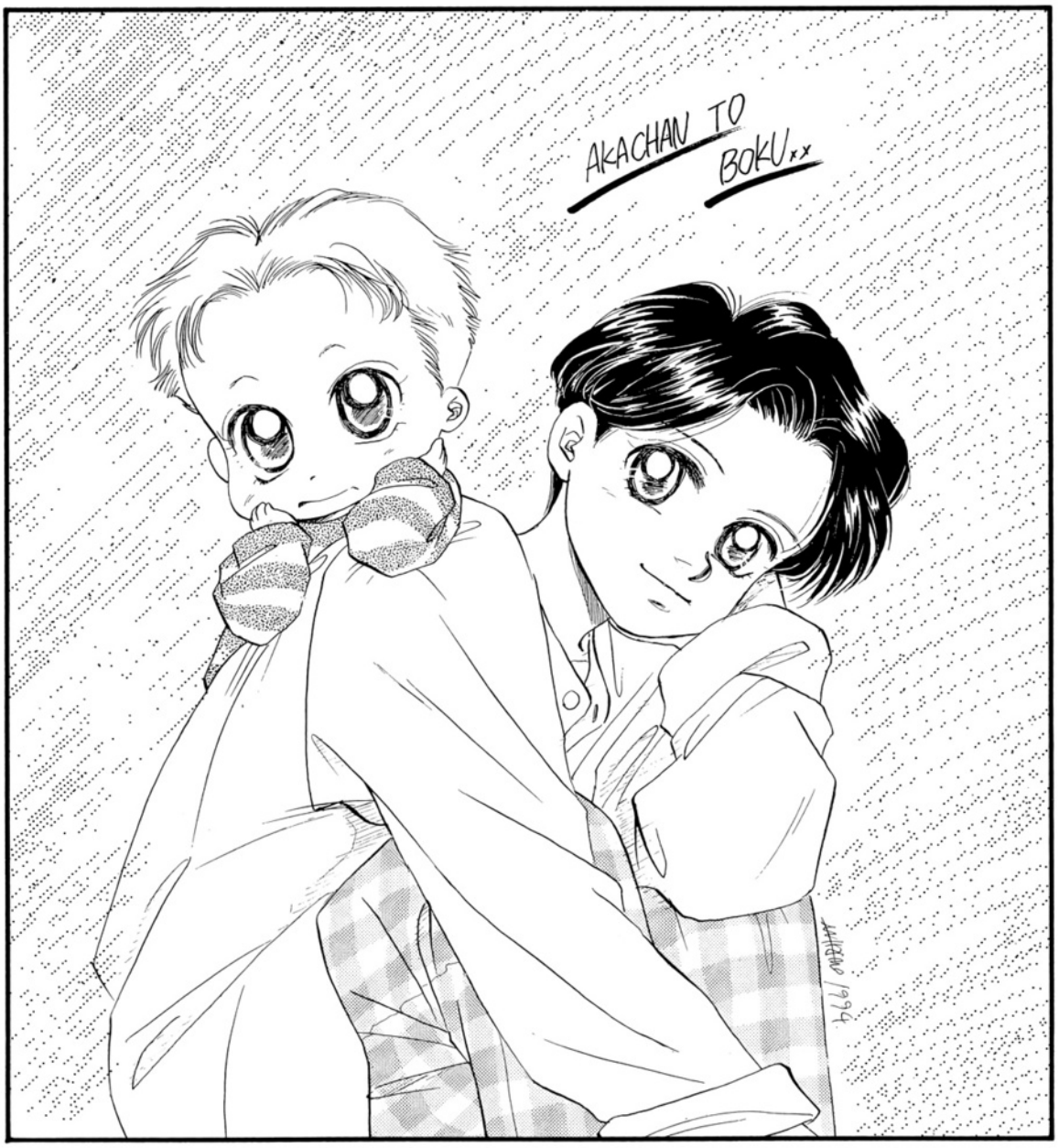
Marimo Ragawa

8

Shojo Beat

BABY & Me

Vol. 8



Story & Art by **Marimo Ragawa**

BABY & ME

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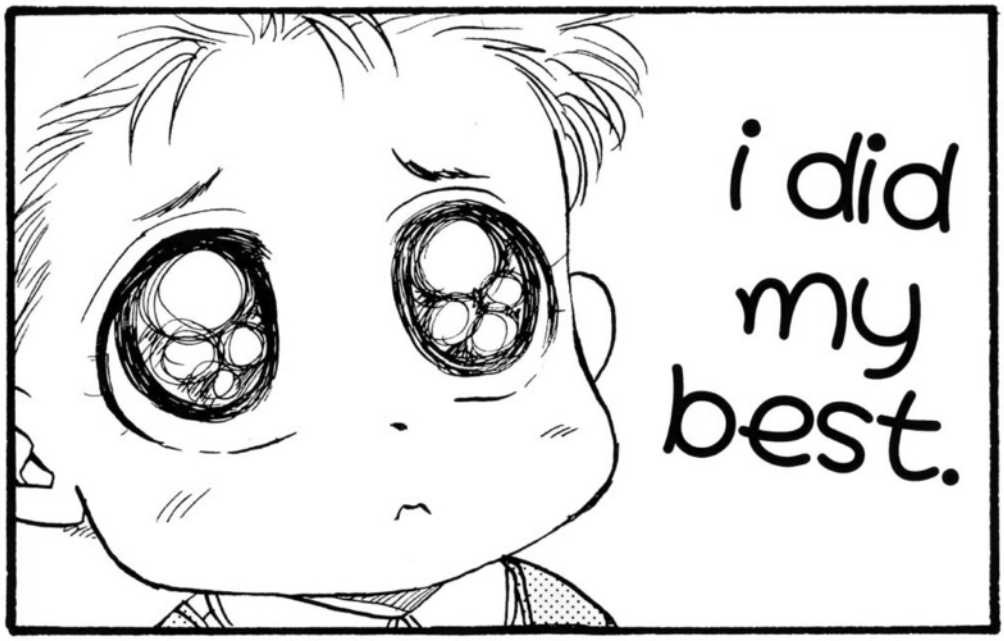
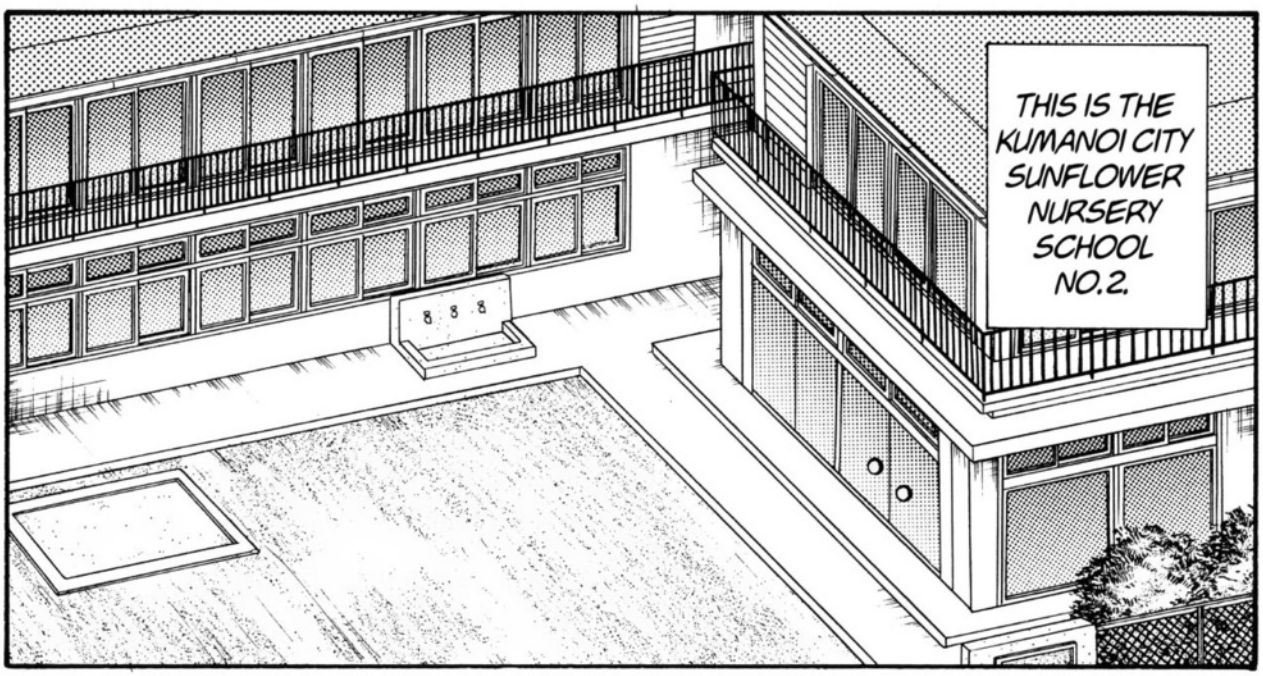
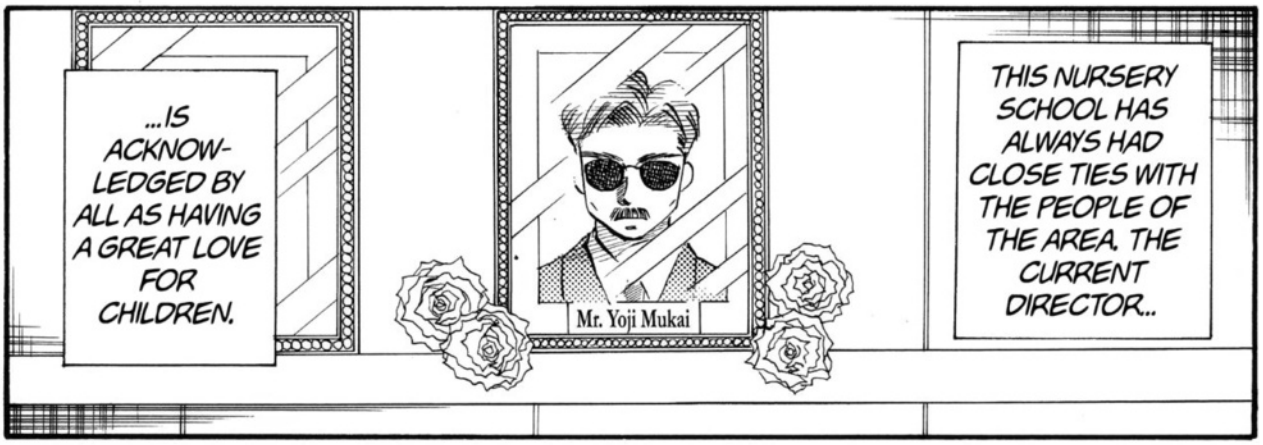
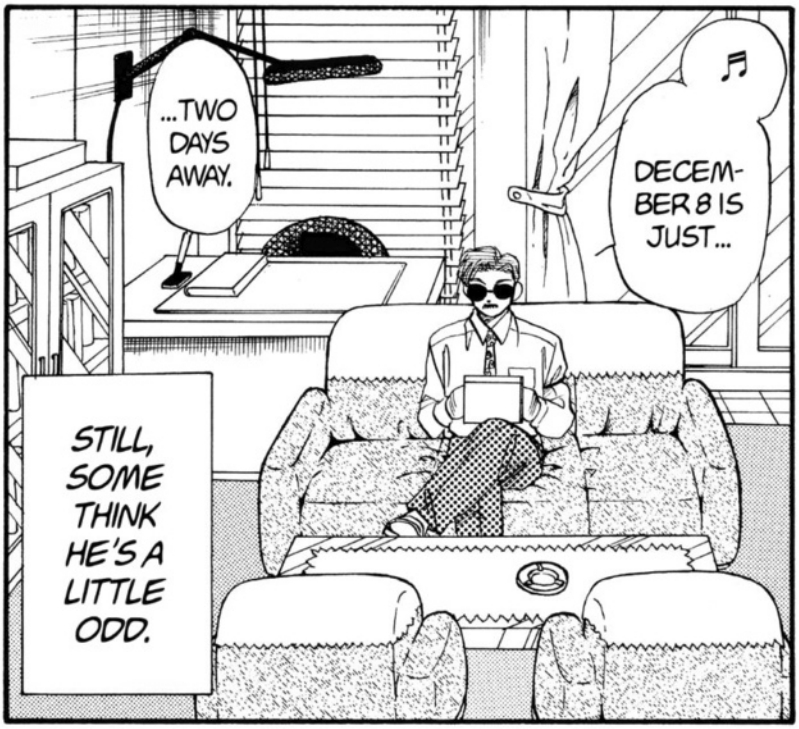
BABY & Me

Chapter 39

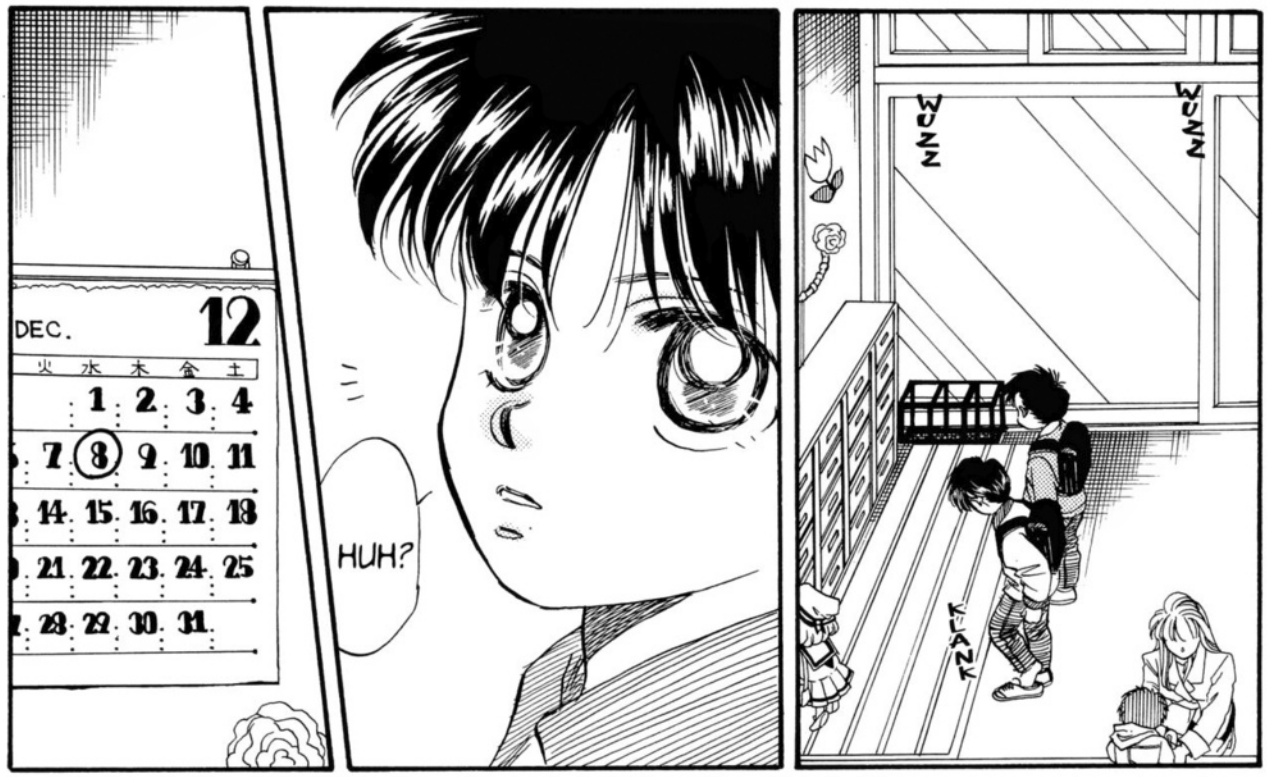

i did
my
best.

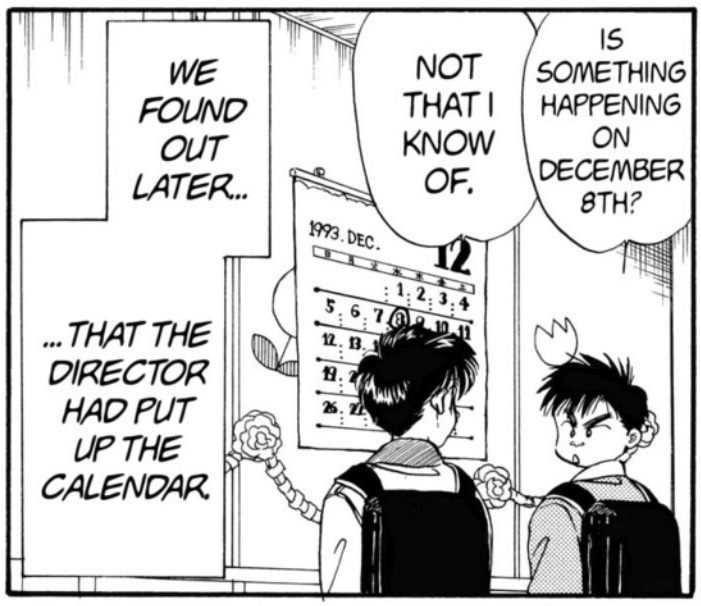

THIS IS THE KUMANOI CITY SUNFLOWER NURSERY SCHOOL NO.2.

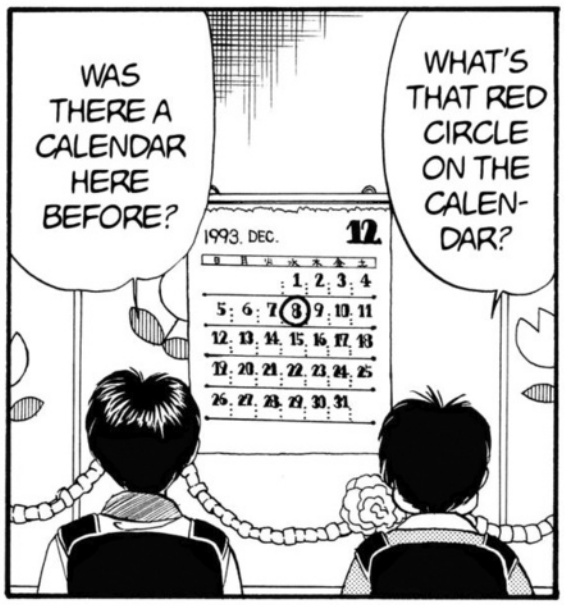

...IS ACKNOW-LEDGED BY ALL AS HAVING A GREAT LOVE FOR CHILDREN.
Mr. Yoji Mukai
THIS NURSERY SCHOOL HAS ALWAYS HAD CLOSE TIES WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE AREA. THE CURRENT DIRECTOR...


...TWO DAYS AWAY.
♬
DECEM-BER 8 IS JUST...
STILL, SOME THINK HE'S A LITTLE ODD.

HUM HUM
12
Mon
Tue
Wed
Thu
1
2
6
7
8
13
14
15
19
20
21
22
26
27
28
29

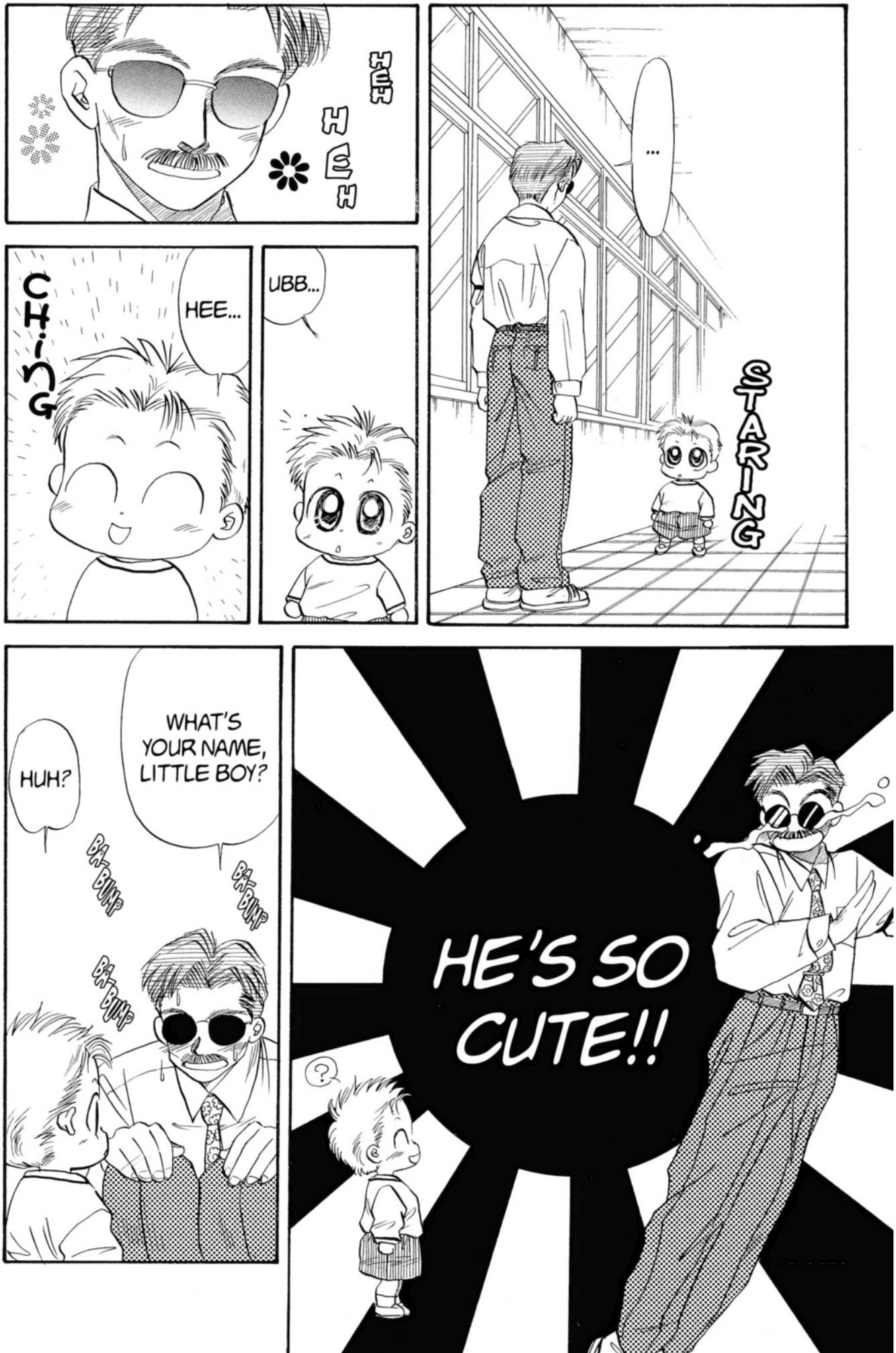

DEC. 12
HUH?
WUZZ
WUZZ
KLANK


WE FOUND OUT LATER...
...THAT THE DIRECTOR HAD PUT UP THE CALENDAR.
NOT THAT I KNOW OF.
IS SOMETHING HAPPENING ON DECEMBER 8TH?
1993. DEC. 12


WAS THERE A CALENDAR HERE BEFORE?
WHAT'S THAT RED CIRCLE ON THE CALENDAR?
1993. DEC. 12

IS SOMEBODY TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING?
A RED CIRCLE...
...THAT I HADN'T EVEN KNOWN THERE WAS A DIRECTOR.
AND THAT'S WHEN I REALIZED ...

HA HA...
HEH...
IT MAKES ME HAPPY JUST WATCHING THEM.
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
TMP
KIDS ARE SO SWEET.
THEY'RE SO CUTE.
BLISS
THEY HAVE BIG EYES AND LITTLE MOUTHS ...
...AND HEALTHY, SMILING FACES...
HMM ...
DID I HAVE A MEAN LOOK ON MY FACE?
HUH?
!!
GASP
...
SWIP...
MOMMY, I'M SCARED ...
SHOOM
...ARE CHIL-DREN SO AFRAID OF ME?
SO WHY...
STARING...

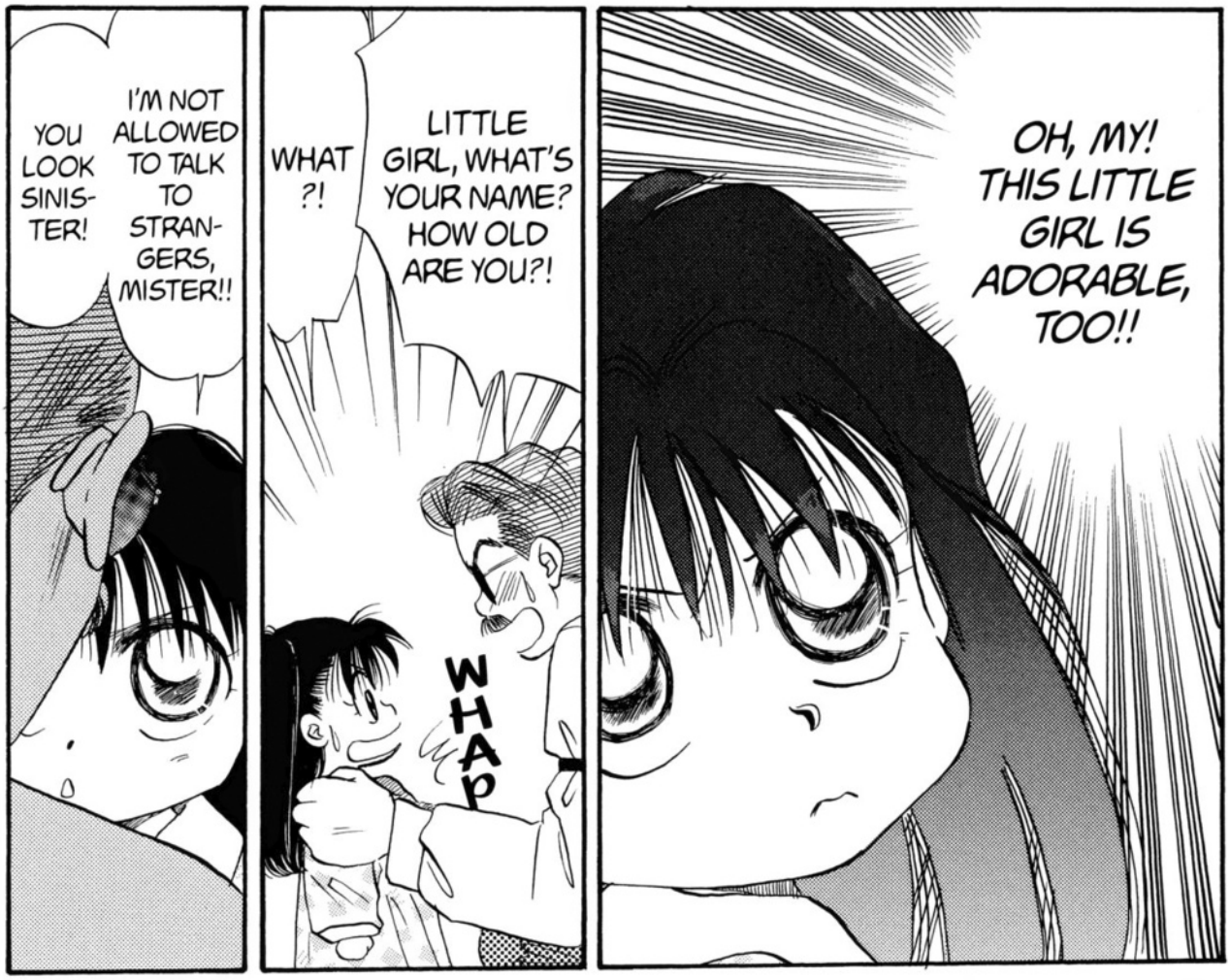

HEH HEH
...
STARING
UBB...
HEE...
CHING
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, LITTLE BOY?
HUH?
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
BA-BUMP
HE'S SO CUTE!!
?

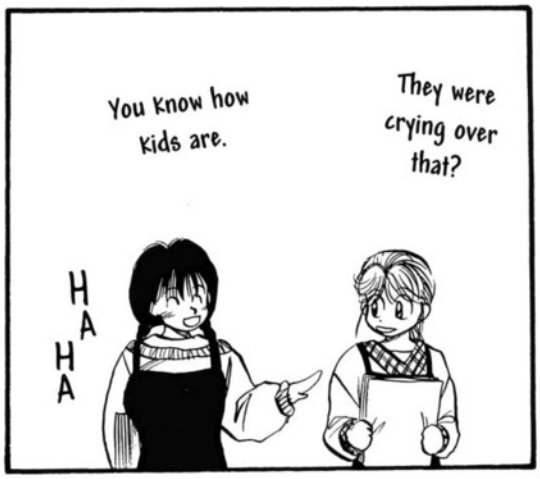
Author's Note 1

Hello, Ragawa here. So, Baby and Me is already up to volume 8. Heh heh heh... (Ragawa grins.)

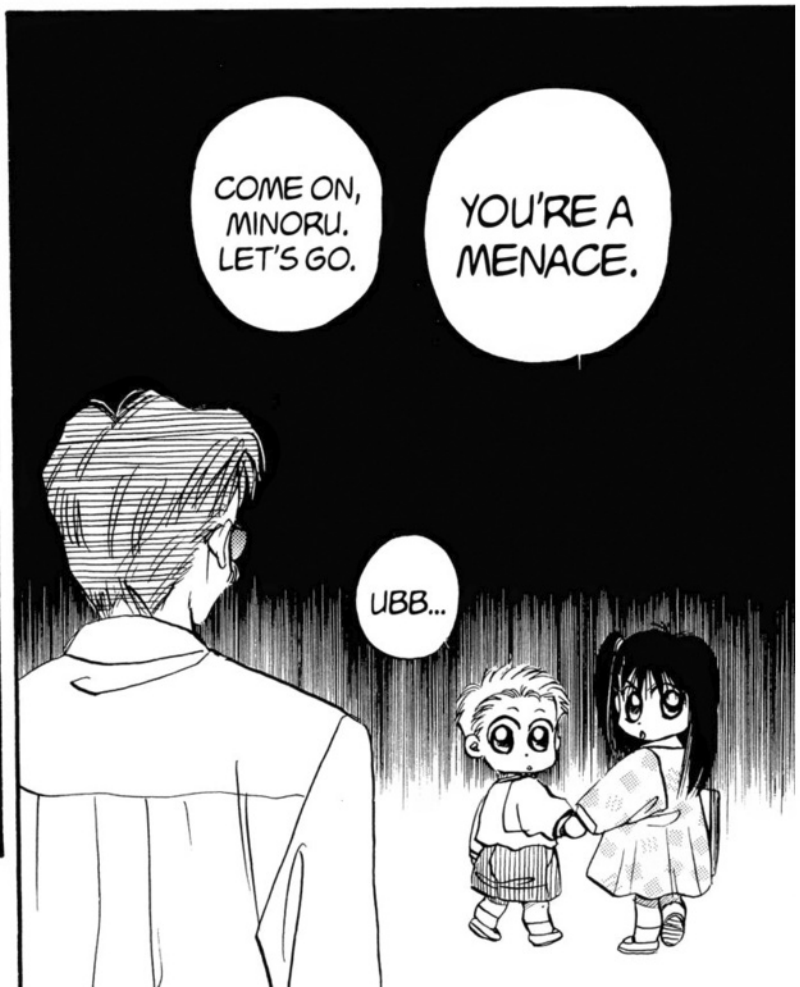
What an awful back view... ♫

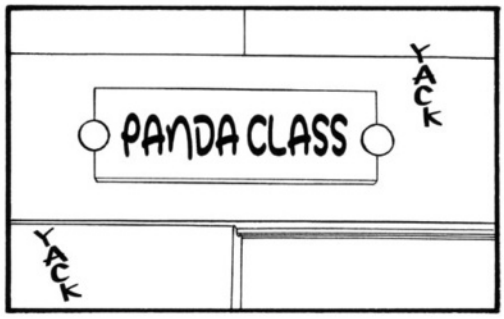
In the story about Sachiko (the rabbit in volume 2), Sachiko drank milk, but that's because she was still a baby. Adult rabbits drink water. They eat raw vegetables, but not wet ones. Yoshizo really loves corn.

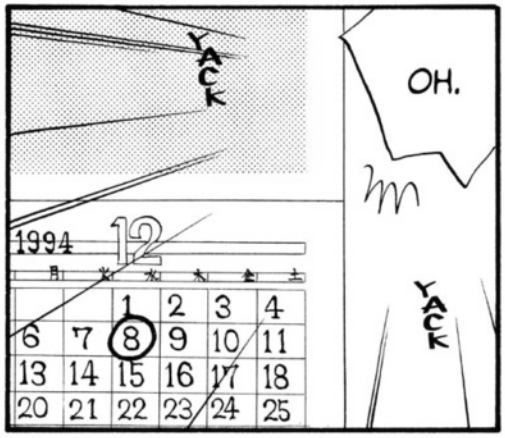

YOU LOOK SINISTER!
I'M NOT ALLOWED TO TALK TO STRANGERS, MISTER!!
WHAT ?!
LITTLE GIRL, WHAT'S YOUR NAME? HOW OLD ARE YOU?!
WHAP
OH, MY! THIS LITTLE GIRL IS ADORABLE, TOO!!

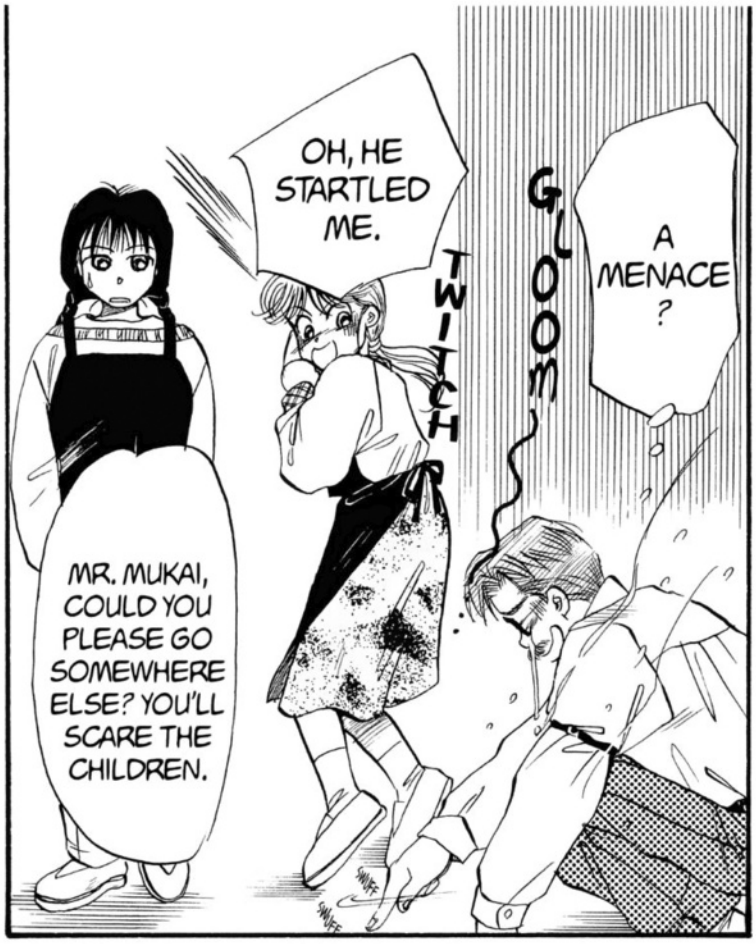

You know how kids are.
They were crying over that?
HAHA

?!


COME ON, MINORU. LET'S GO.
YOU'RE A MENACE.
UBB...

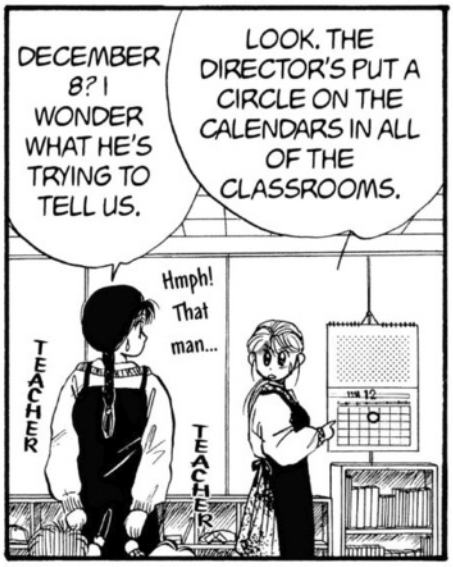

PANDA CLASS
YACK
YACK

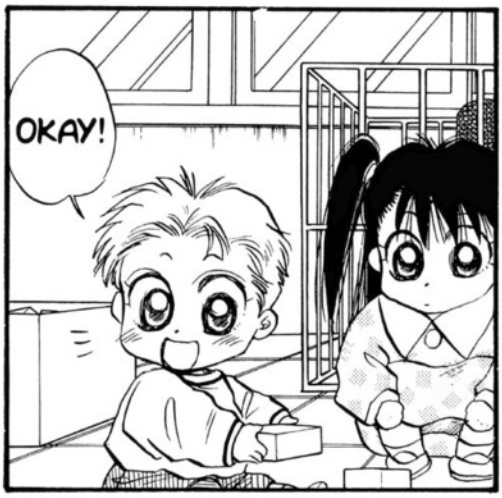

YACK
1994 12
OH.
YACK


OH, HE STARTLED ME.
A MENACE ?
GLOOM
TWITCH
MR. MUKAI, COULD YOU PLEASE GO SOMEWHERE ELSE? YOU'LL SCARE THE CHILDREN.

ACTUALLY, I HEAR THEY DON'T GET ALONG.
THEY MUST BE VERY CLOSE IF THEY BOTH CHOSE THE SAME PROFESSION.
YACK
YACK

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE DIRECTOR OF SUNFLOWER NURSERY NO.1 IS MR. MUKAI'S OLDER BROTHER?
NO, I DIDN'T.


DECEMBER 8? I WONDER WHAT HE'S TRYING TO TELL US.
LOOK. THE DIRECTOR'S PUT A CIRCLE ON THE CALENDARS IN ALL OF THE CLASSROOMS.
Hmph! That man...
TEACHER
TEACHER


OKAY!

LET'S GO HOME.
YACK
YACK
MI-NORU ...

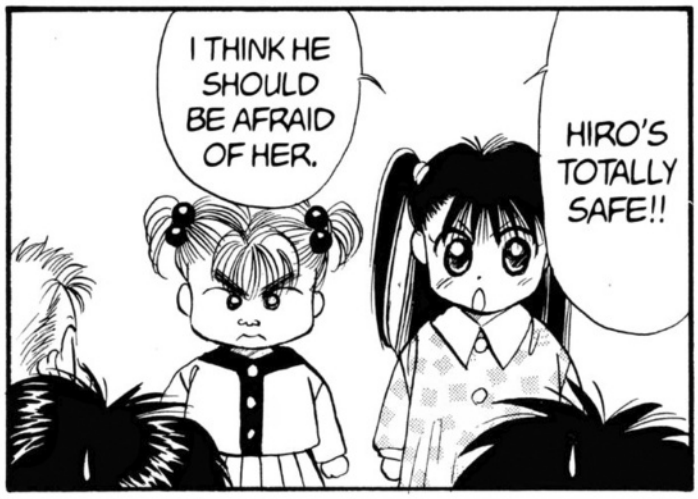
A STRANGE MAN TRIED TO TALK TO MINORU AND ME IN THE HALLWAY TODAY.
WHAT ?
IN THE HALL-WAY?

ICHIKA BELONGS TO ANOTHER CLASS, BUT SHE'S ALWAYS WITH MINORU, ISN'T SHE?
I'M PROTECT-ING HIM.
BWUZA ...
BWUZA ...
TUP
TUP

YEAH.

WHAT IF HE GOES AFTER HIRO? THIS IS BAD.
DID SOMEONE JUST WALK IN OFF THE STREET? THAT'S SCARY IF IT'S TRUE.

BUT HE LOOKED LIKE A SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER TO ME.
I DON'T KNOW.
WHAT WAS A STRANGE MAN DOING IN THE HALLWAY?
CAN'T YOU TALK MORE LIKE A LITTLE KID?

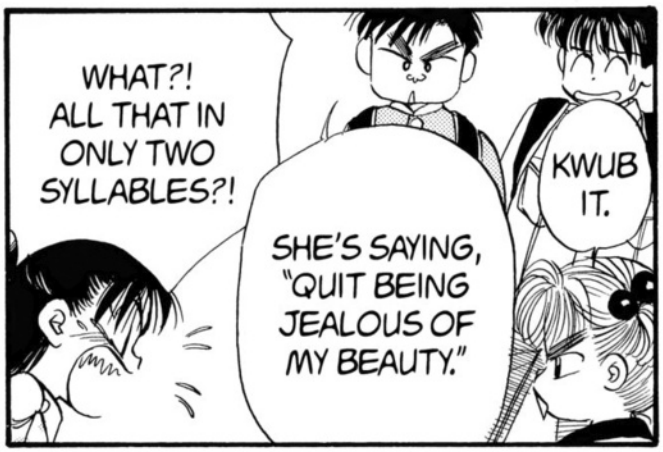

I THINK HE SHOULD BE AFRAID OF HER.
HIRO'S TOTALLY SAFE!!

WHY WOULDN'T HE?
HIRO ?!

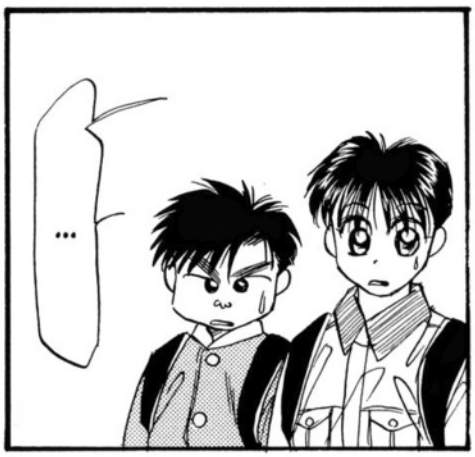
OH!

OH...
...IT'S THOSE CHILDREN.

THUMP
OWW!


WHAT?! ALL THAT IN ONLY TWO SYLLABLES?!
SHE'S SAYING, "QUIT BEING JEALOUS OF MY BEAUTY."
KWUB IT.

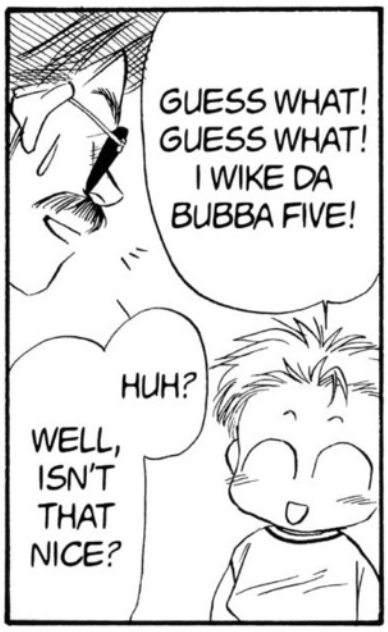
...


...

THAT'S HIM!

NO WAY!
PLEASE BELIEVE ME.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'M NOT A BAD GUY.
I WORK HERE.

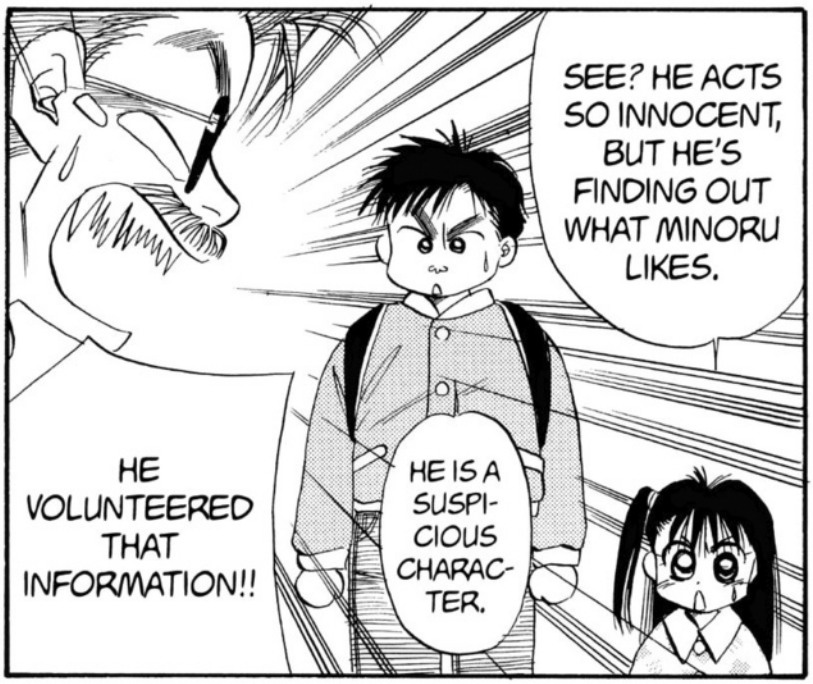
STAY CALM ...
STAY CALM ...
AHEM

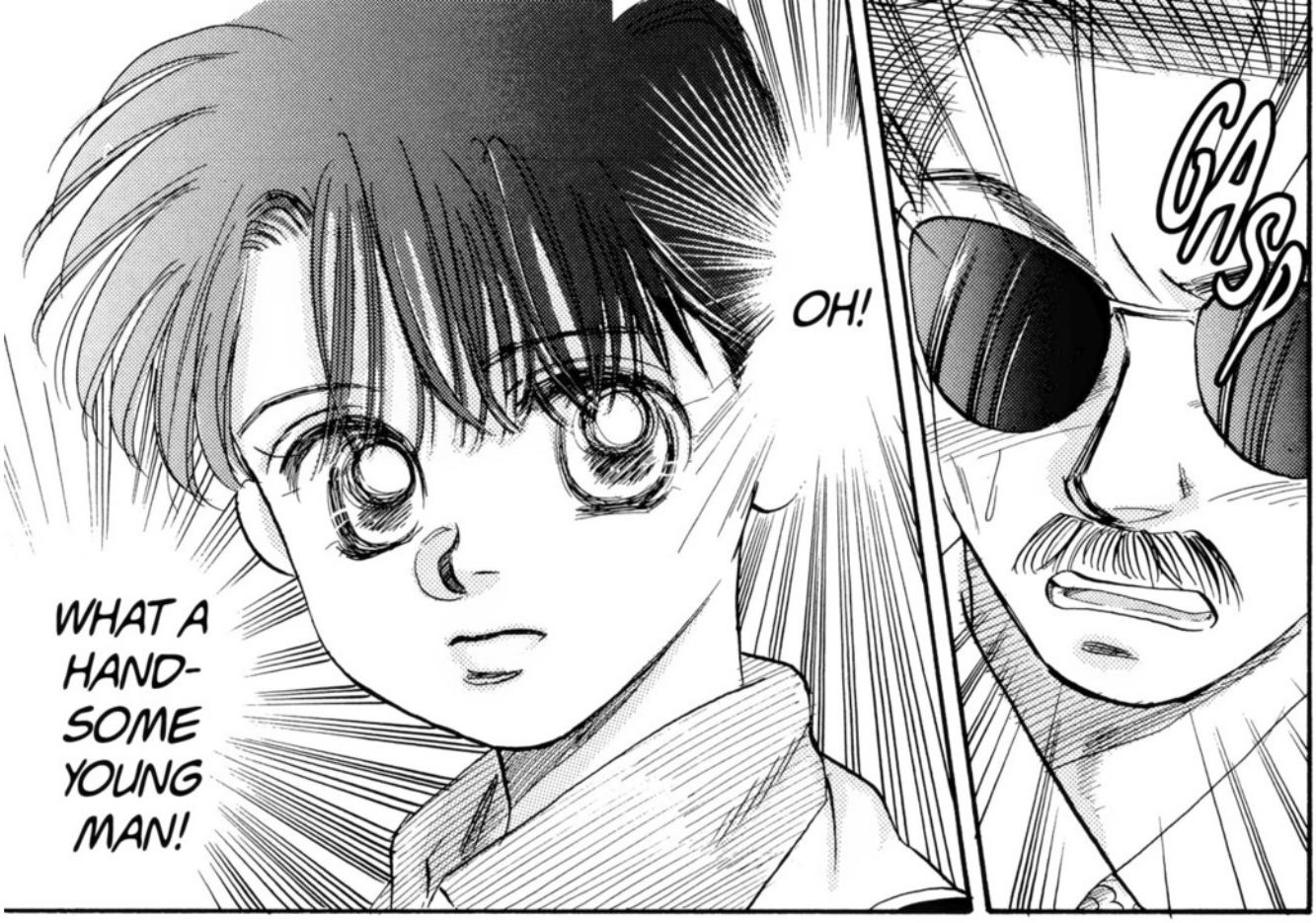

GUESS WHAT! GUESS WHAT! I WIKE DA BUBBA FIVE!
HUH?
WELL, ISN'T THAT NICE?

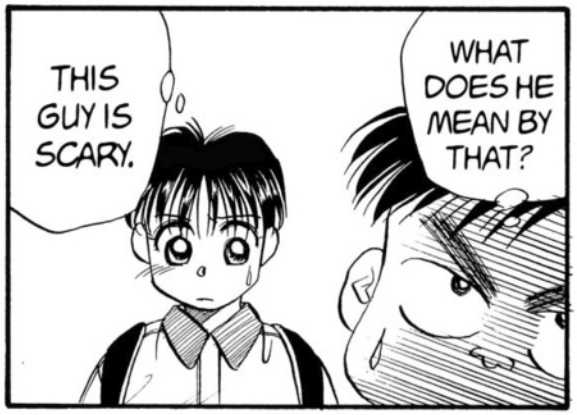
...

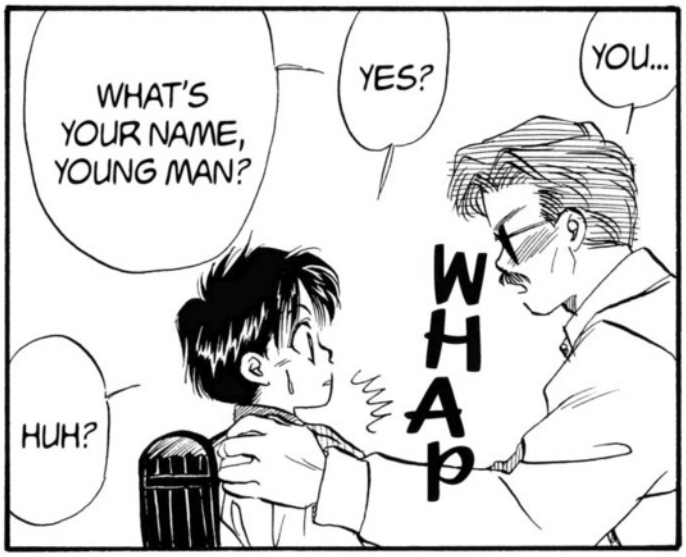
MINOWU, I DIDN'T HURT YOU, DID I?
HUH?

UM... YOU SAID YOU WORK HERE. ARE YOU A TEACHER?
HMM?

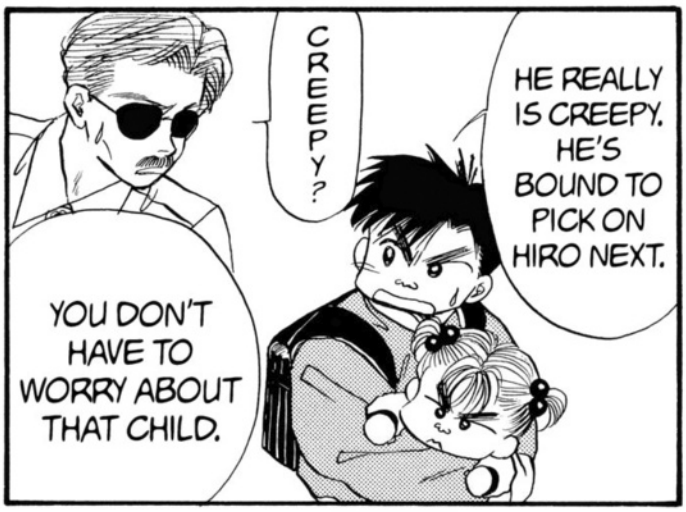

SEE? HE ACTS SO INNOCENT, BUT HE'S FINDING OUT WHAT MINORU LIKES.
HE IS A SUSPI-CIOUS CHARAC-TER.
HE VOLUNTEERED THAT INFORMATION!!


GASP
OH!
WHAT A HAND-SOME YOUNG MAN!

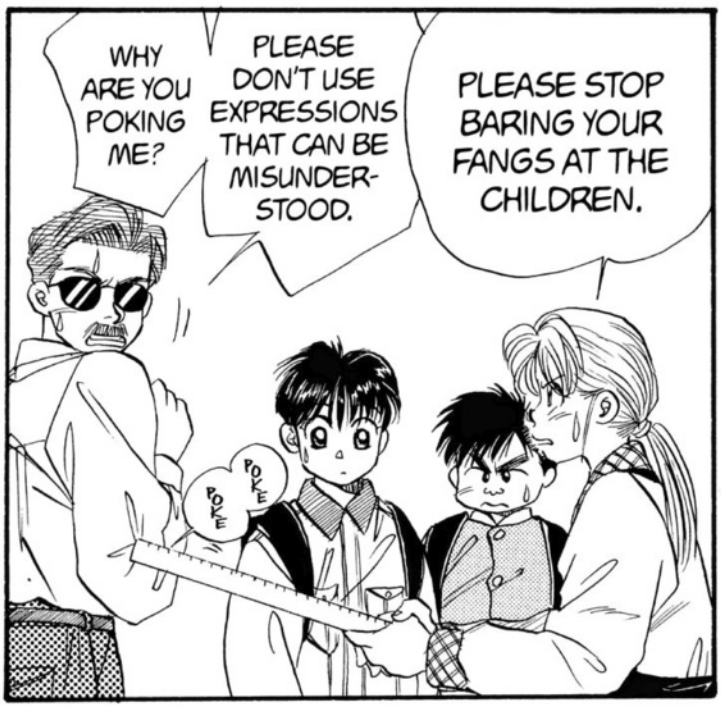

WHAT DOES HE MEAN BY THAT?
THIS GUY IS SCARY.

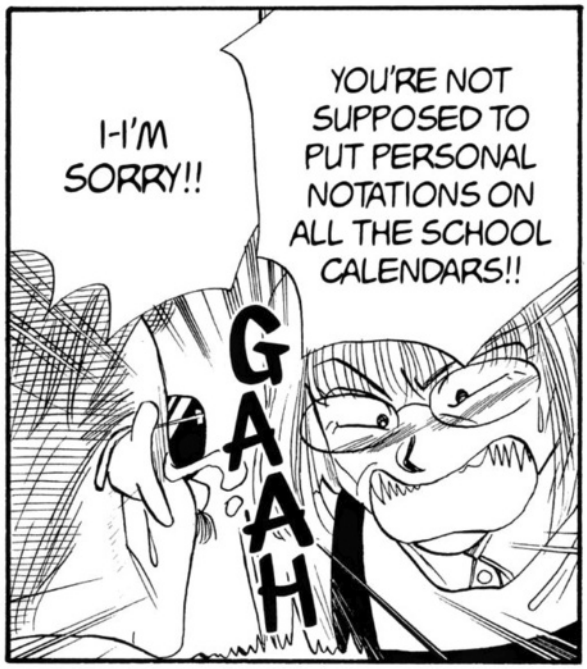

YOU...
YES?
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, YOUNG MAN?
WHAP
HUH?

DIRECTOR MUKAI!
OH!
PANDA GLASS
TWITCH

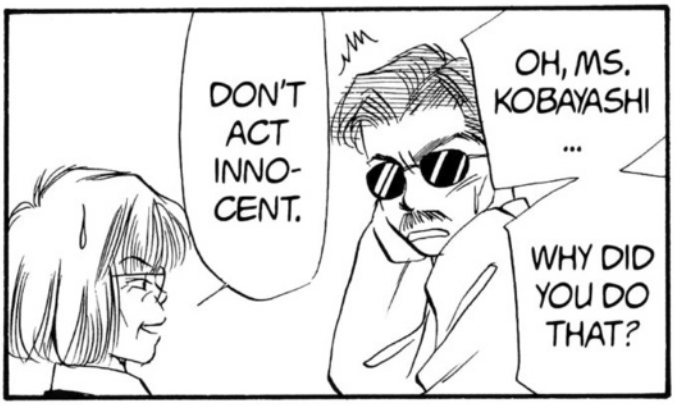

HE REALLY IS CREEPY. HE'S BOUND TO PICK ON HIRO NEXT.
CREEPY?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT CHILD.

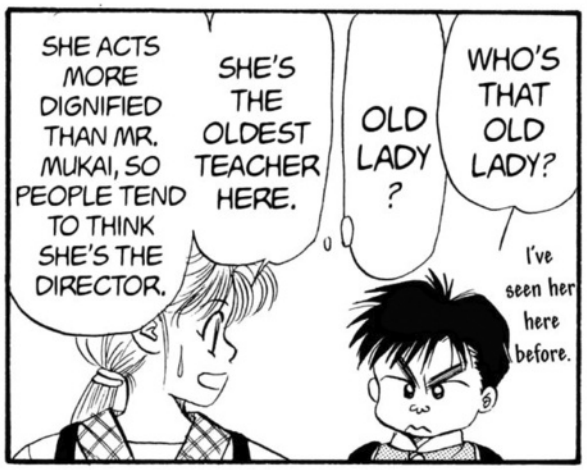
BUT I LOVE KIDS! REALLY, I DO!!
YOU PROBABLY SCARED TAKUYA HALF TO DEATH!!
WHY DO YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO LOOK SO SINISTER?
WAAH

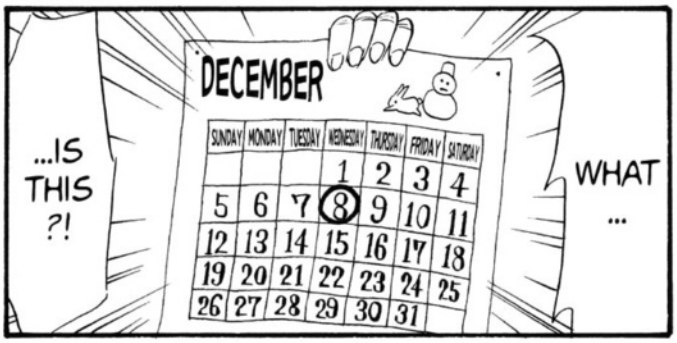

WHY ARE YOU POKING ME?
PLEASE DON'T USE EXPRESSIONS THAT CAN BE MISUNDER-STOOD.
PLEASE STOP BARING YOUR FANGS AT THE CHILDREN.
POKE
POKE


I-I'M SORRY!!
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO PUT PERSONAL NOTATIONS ON ALL THE SCHOOL CALENDARS!!
GAAH

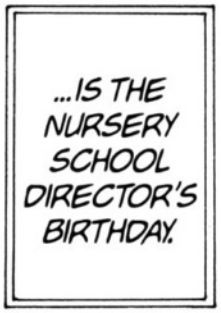
OUCH.
KRAK


DON'T ACT INNO-CENT.
OH, MS. KOBAYASHI ...
WHY DID YOU DO THAT?


SHE ACTS MORE DIGNIFIED THAN MR. MUKAI, SO PEOPLE TEND TO THINK SHE'S THE DIRECTOR.
SHE'S THE OLDEST TEACHER HERE.
OLD LADY ?
WHO'S THAT OLD LADY?
I've seen her here before.


...IS THIS ?!
DECEMBER
SUNDAY MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY
1 2 3 4
5 6 7 8 9 10 11
12 13 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25
26 27 28 29 30 31
WHAT ...

*Yakuza = Japanese mafia



YOU SEEM TO KNOW SOMETHING.
DECEMBER 8 IS THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW. DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?
YES?
KLANG
THE DAY THE DIRECTOR HAS MARKED IN RED?

YACK
MS. KOBA-YASHI...
YACK

THERE WAS ANOTHER TIME, A FEW YEARS AGO, WHEN HE DROPPED HINTS LIKE THAT.
I THINK SO.
D-DOES HE WANT US TO CELEBRATE IT?

IT'S A PER-SONAL MATTER FOR THE DIREC-TOR.
OH, THAT...

OF COURSE NOT.
AND DID YOU THROW A BIRTH-DAY PARTY FOR HIM?
HE'S SO CHILD-ISH.
THAT YEAR HIS BROTHER, THE DIRECTOR OF SUNFLOWER NURSERY SCHOOL NO.1, GOT SOME BIRTHDAY GIFTS FROM HIS PUPILS.
MR. MUKAI WAS JEALOUS. THAT'S PROBABLY WHAT'S BEHIND THIS.

IT'S HIS BIRTHDAY.

OH. WELL, I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM SINCE.
I MET HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY.
BY THE WAY, WHAT'S THIS PIECE OF PAPER? CAN I SEE IT?
ubb ...

OH, NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...
I MET HIM WHEN MINORU FIRST STARTED THERE.
THE DIRECTOR?

WELL, IT'S PRETTY SILLY.

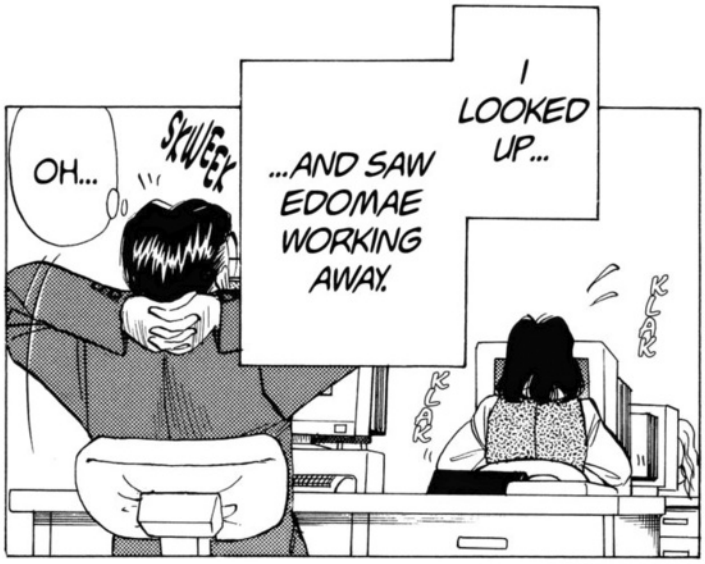
WHAT IS IT?
HOW ABOUT DINNER TONIGHT?

IT'S PROOF THAT EDOMAE WAS GOOFING OFF AT WORK.
?
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

ASKING US TO DO THIS IN A WEEK...
IT'S REALLY TOO MUCH.
BUT WE NEED THE BUSINESS RIGHT NOW.

THERE'S A HARD JOB WE'RE ALL WORKING ON NOW. WE'LL PROBABLY HAVE TO WORK OVERTIME FOR A WEEK TO FINISH IT.
I WANNA GO HOME ...
SIGH...
KLAK
KLAK
CHIEF

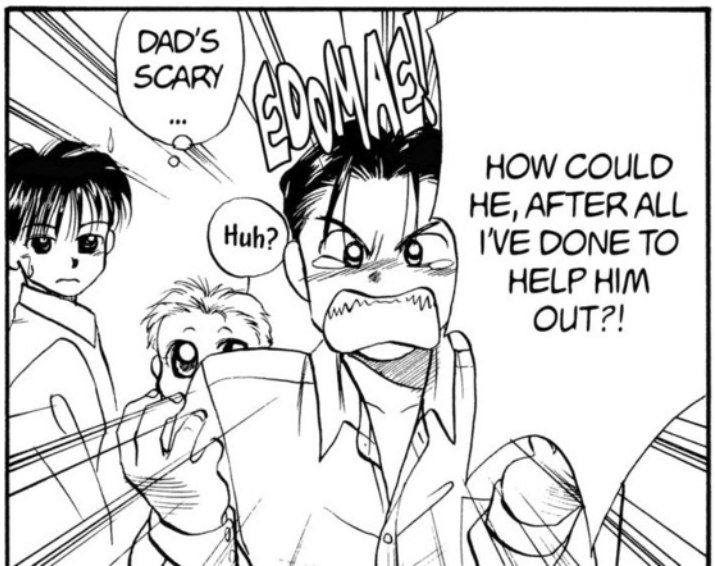
BUT IT WASN'T WORK...
HERE.
HOW ABOUT DINNER TONIGHT?
The words were made of hearts.

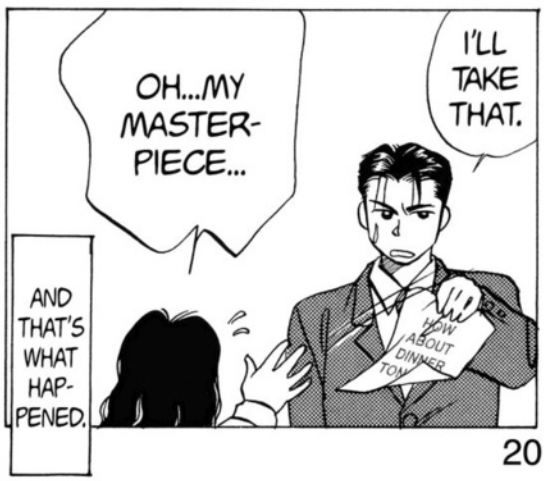

OH...
SKWEEK
...AND SAW EDOMAE WORKING AWAY.
I LOOKED UP...
KLAK
KLAK

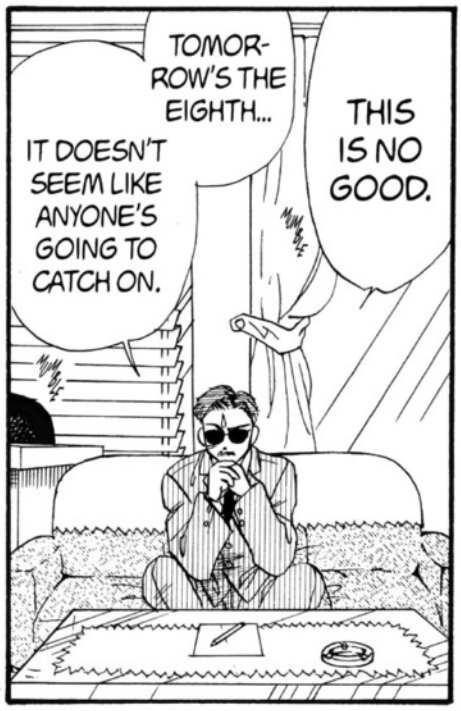
MS. OMO-RI...
?

♬
WRR...

AARGH!
TWITCH
EDOMAE!! STOP WASTING TIME ON CHILDISH STUFF LIKE THIS WHEN WE'RE SO BUSY!!


DAD'S SCARY ...
EDOMAE!
Huh?
HOW COULD HE, AFTER ALL I'VE DONE TO HELP HIM OUT?!


OH...MY MASTER-PIECE...
I'LL TAKE THAT.
AND THAT'S WHAT HAP-PENED.
HOW ABOUT DINNER TON


THIS IS NO GOOD.
TOMORROW'S THE EIGHTH...
IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE ANYONE'S GOING TO CATCH ON.

HMM...
TAK
TAK

THE NEXT DAY, DECEMBER 7.
KUMANOI CITY
SUNFLOWER NURSERY SCHOOL NO.2

WELL, UH...
WHAT IS IT?

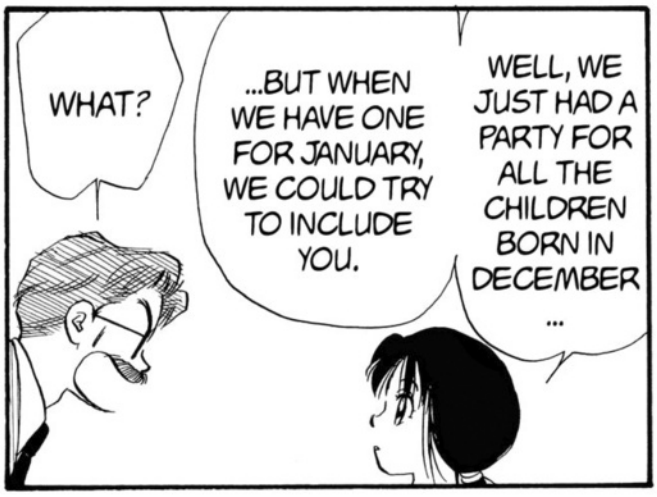
YES?
OH, YOU THERE!

I WISH THERE WERE A WAY I COULD QUIETLY LET THEM KNOW.
DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
KLAK

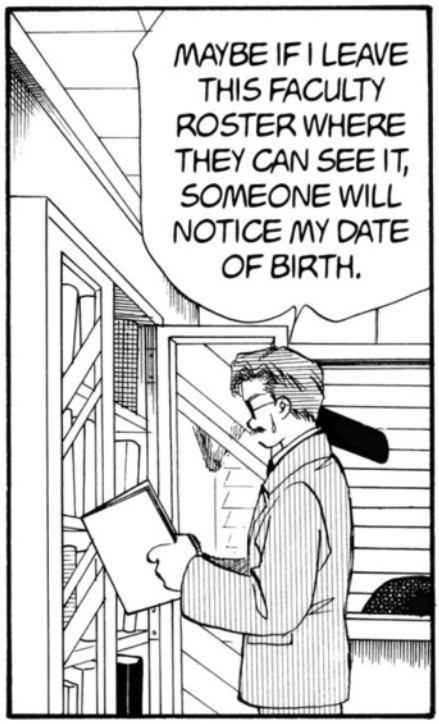
WHAT?!
DO YOU WANT...A BIRTHDAY PARTY?
BA-BUMP

...

B-BIRTHDAY PARTIES ARE, UM...
THEY'RE NICE NO MATTER HOW OLD YOU ARE, DON'T YOU THINK?


WHAT?
...BUT WHEN WE HAVE ONE FOR JANUARY, WE COULD TRY TO INCLUDE YOU.
WELL, WE JUST HAD A PARTY FOR ALL THE CHILDREN BORN IN DECEMBER ...

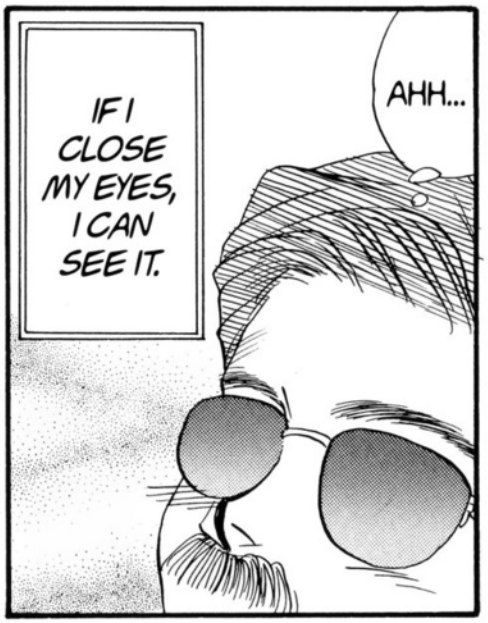
JUST SOME-THING SMALL BUT SINCERE, MAYBE...
NO, UH... NOTHING ELABOR-ATE...


MAYBE IF I LEAVE THIS FACULTY ROSTER WHERE THEY CAN SEE IT, SOMEONE WILL NOTICE MY DATE OF BIRTH.

KUMANOI CITY
SUNFLOWER NURSERY SCHOOL NO.2
FACULTY ROSTER

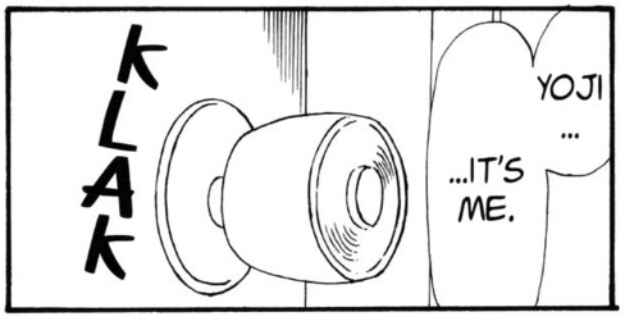
YEAH, RIGHT. I KNOW THE WHOLE STORY. HE'S SWEATING IT.
HOW NICE OF YOU TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE CHILDREN.
HEH... HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA...

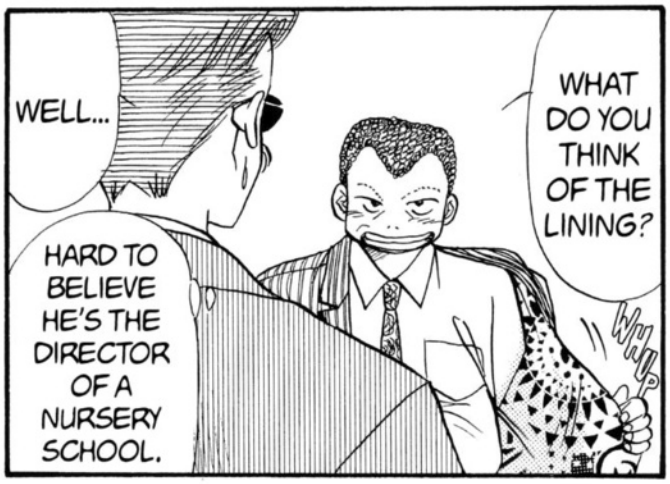
HAPPY BIRTHDAY...
HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU...
ENRAP TURED
THIS GUY REALLY IS A STRANGE ONE.

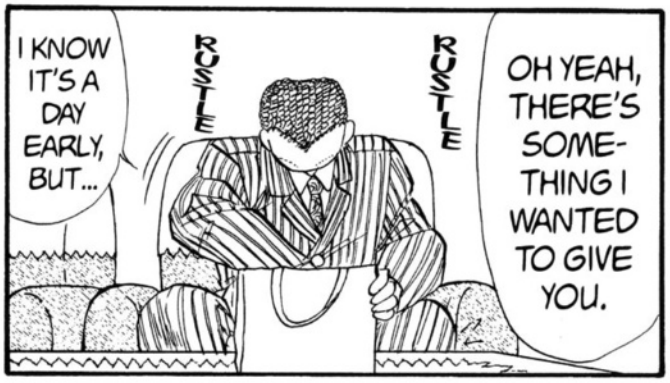

IF I CLOSE MY EYES, I CAN SEE IT.
AHH...

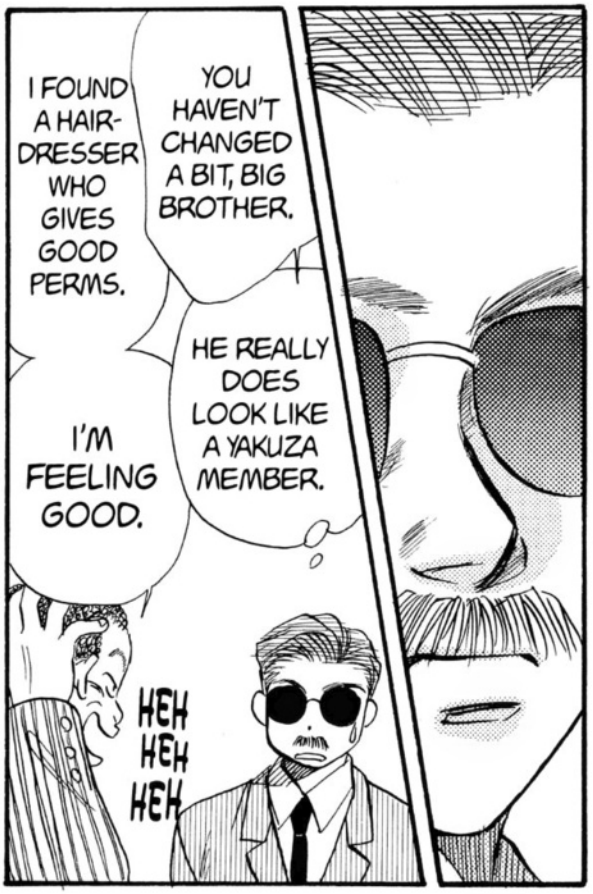
I WAS IN THE NEIGHBOR-HOOD ON BUSINESS...
...SO I THOUGHT I'D DROP BY.

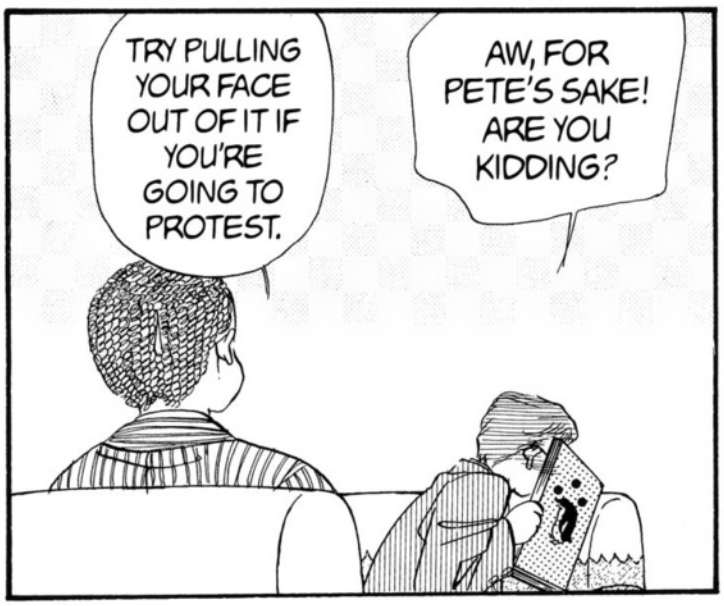
BAM
BAM
!!

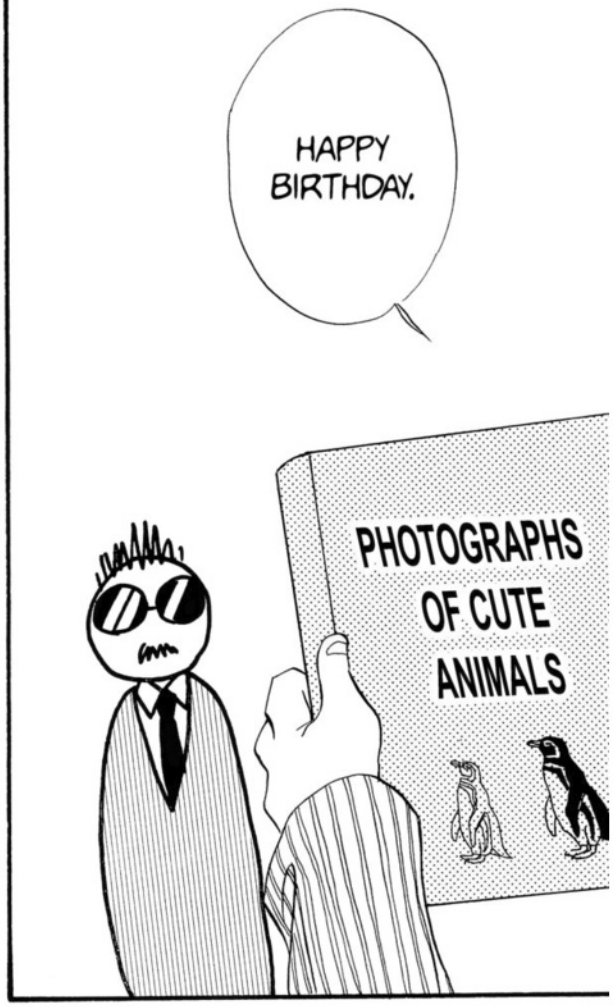

KLAK
YOJI ...
...IT'S ME.

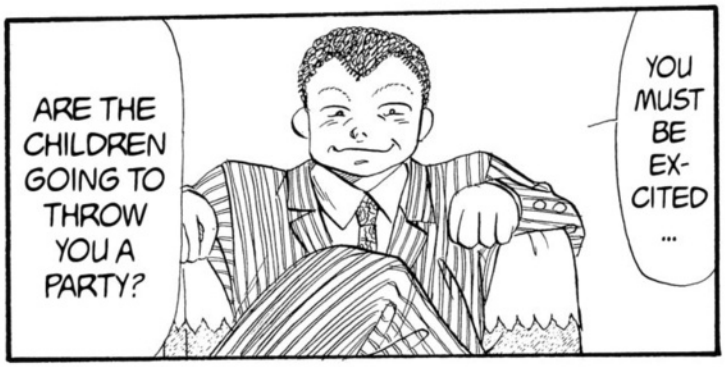

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE LINING?
WHAP
WELL...
HARD TO BELIEVE HE'S THE DIRECTOR OF A NURSERY SCHOOL.


OH YEAH, THERE'S SOME-THING I WANTED TO GIVE YOU.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
I KNOW IT'S A DAY EARLY, BUT...

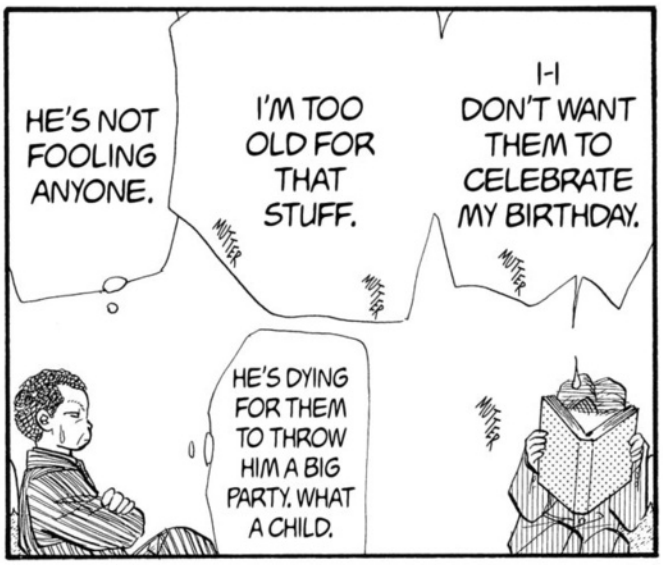

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT, BIG BROTHER.
I FOUND A HAIR-DRESSER WHO GIVES GOOD PERMS.
HE REALLY DOES LOOK LIKE A YAKUZA MEMBER.
I'M FEELING GOOD.
HEH HEH HEH

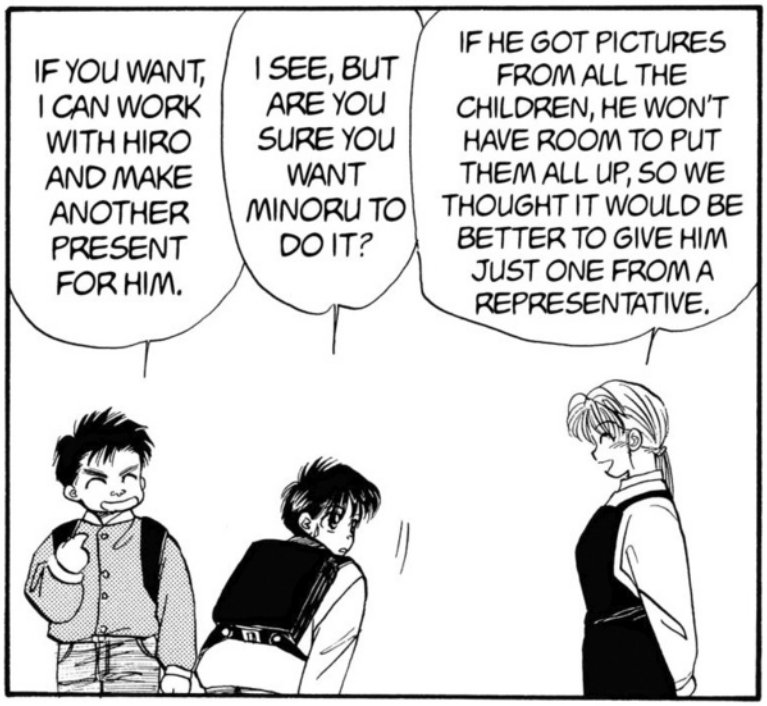

TRY PULLING YOUR FACE OUT OF IT IF YOU'RE GOING TO PROTEST.
AW, FOR PETE'S SAKE! ARE YOU KIDDING?

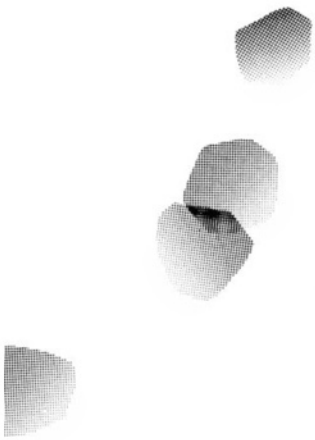

HAPPY BIRTHDAY.
PHOTOGRAPHS OF CUTE ANIMALS


ARE THE CHILDREN GOING TO THROW YOU A PARTY?
YOU MUST BE EX-CITED ...

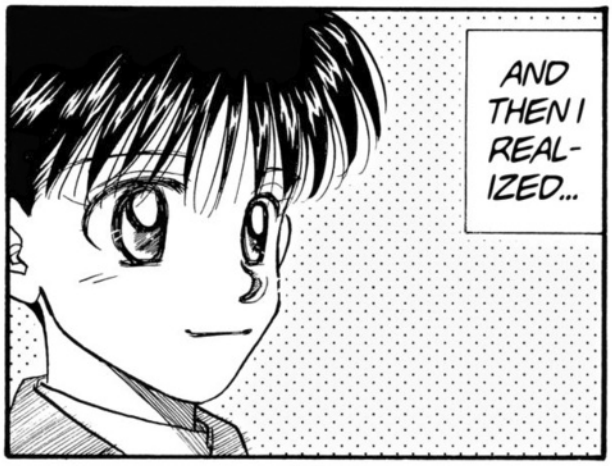
TAKUYA...


HE'S NOT FOOLING ANYONE.
I'M TOO OLD FOR THAT STUFF.
I-I DON'T WANT THEM TO CELEBRATE MY BIRTHDAY.
MUTTER
MUTTER
MUTTER
MUTTER
HE'S DYING FOR THEM TO THROW HIM A BIG PARTY. WHAT A CHILD.

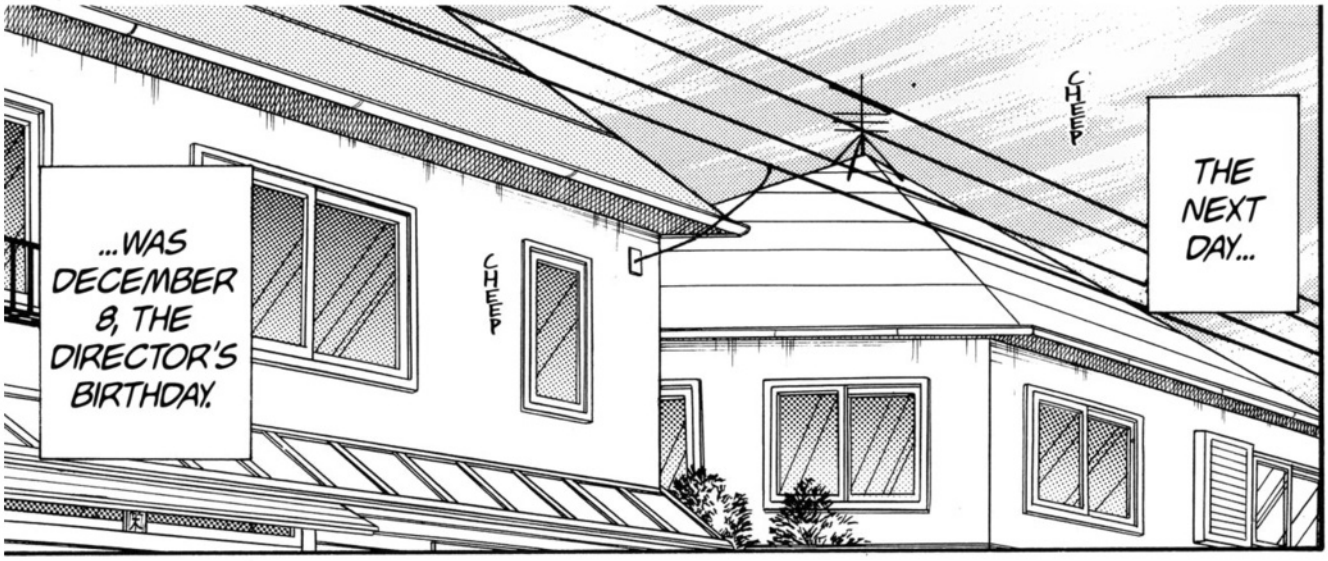




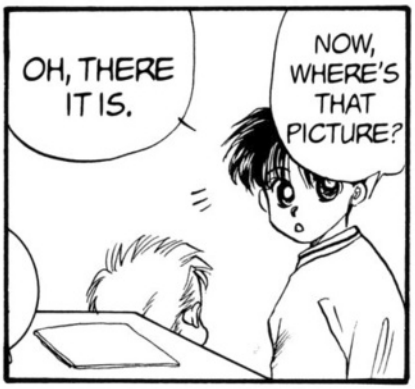
...THAT EVEN THOUGH THE TEACHERS COMPLAIN ABOUT MR. MUKAI, THEY REALLY DO LIKE HIM.



LET ME SEE.
YOU ARE?
BWUZA, I DONE.
KRIK
KRIK
OH ...
OH ...
COME TO THINK OF IT...
...MINORU WASN'T AFRAID OF MR. MUKAI AT ALL.
STARE
HMM...
I GUESS IT LOOKS A LITTLE LIKE MR. MUKAI. OR NOT.
i did my best.
IS THIS REALLY GOOD ENOUGH?
OGAY.
nod
...SO PUT YOUR CRAYONS AWAY, OKAY?
NOW, IT'S TIME FOR DINNER...
YAY.
IT'S GOOD. IT LOOKS JUST LIKE HIM.


...WAS DECEMBER 8, THE DIRECTOR'S BIRTHDAY.
CHEEP
CHEEP
THE NEXT DAY...

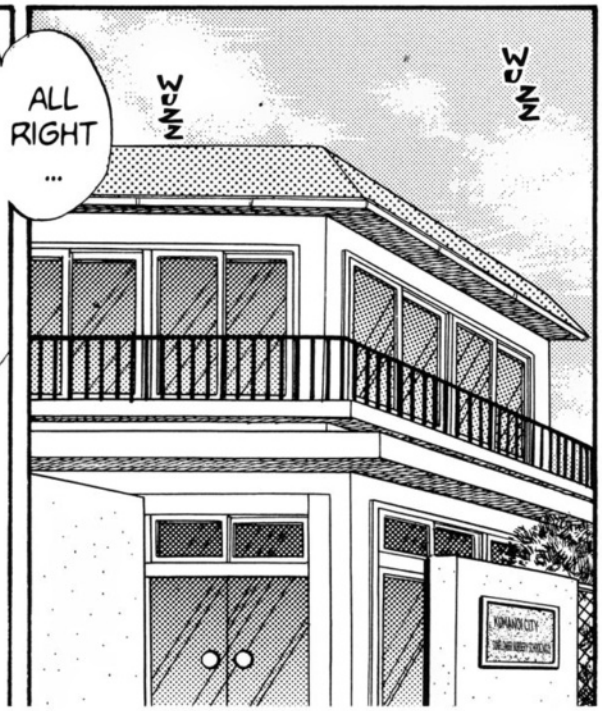
IT'S HIS BIRTHDAY TODAY.
DON'T FORGET IT WHEN YOU TAKE MINORU TODAY, OKAY?
OH YEAH? WHAT FOR?
Director Mukai
Happy Birthday
Minoru &
Takuya Enoki


OH, THERE IT IS.
NOW, WHERE'S THAT PICTURE?

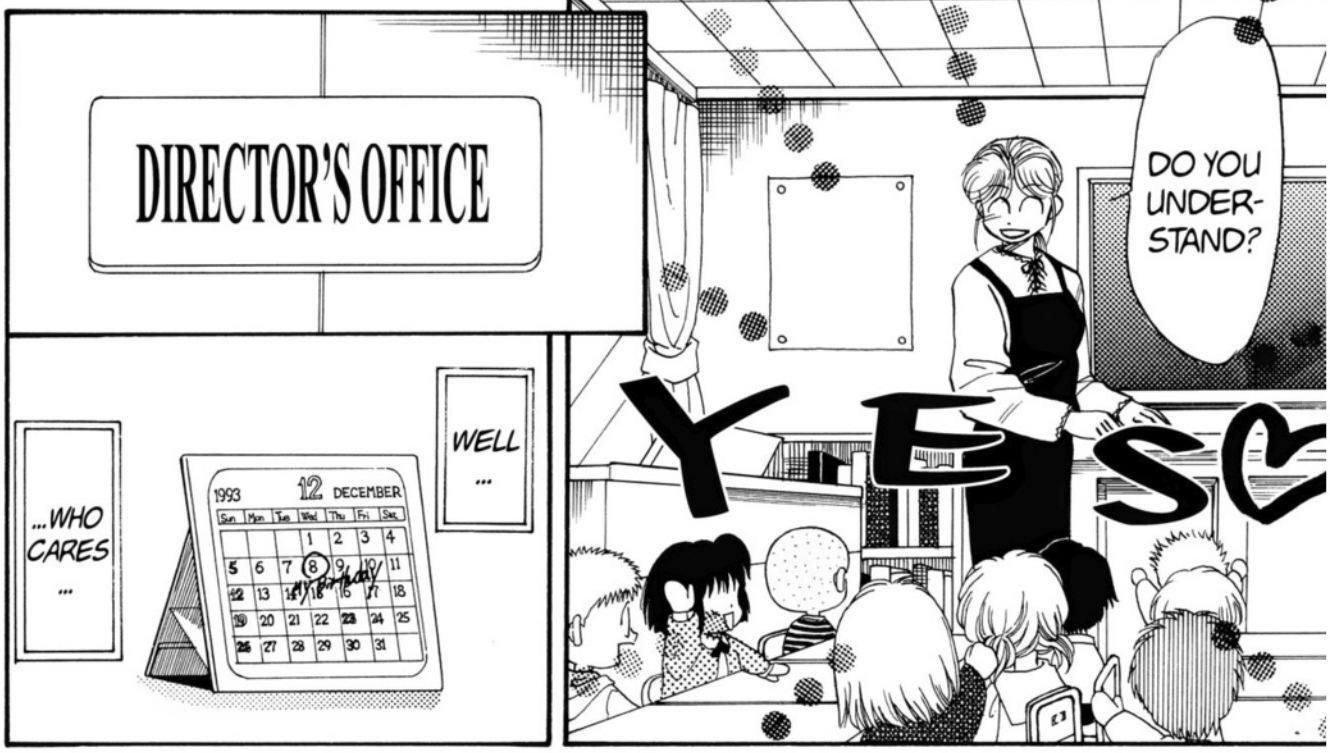
HOME-WORK?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
GOOD MORN-ING, DAD.
GOO' MOWN-ING.
NO. IT'S A MESSAGE FOR DIRECTOR MUKAI.

MORN-ING...
DAZED..

ALL RIGHT ...
...LET'S MAKE SOME PAPER MORNING GLORIES, SHALL WE?


WUZZ
WUZZ

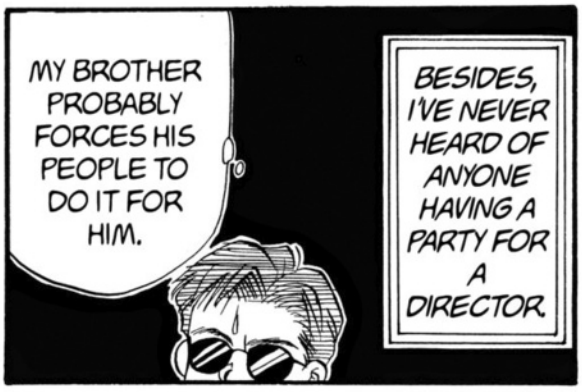
MINORU, SAY HAPPY BIRTHDAY WHEN YOU GIVE IT TO HIM, OKAY?
OGAY.
NOD

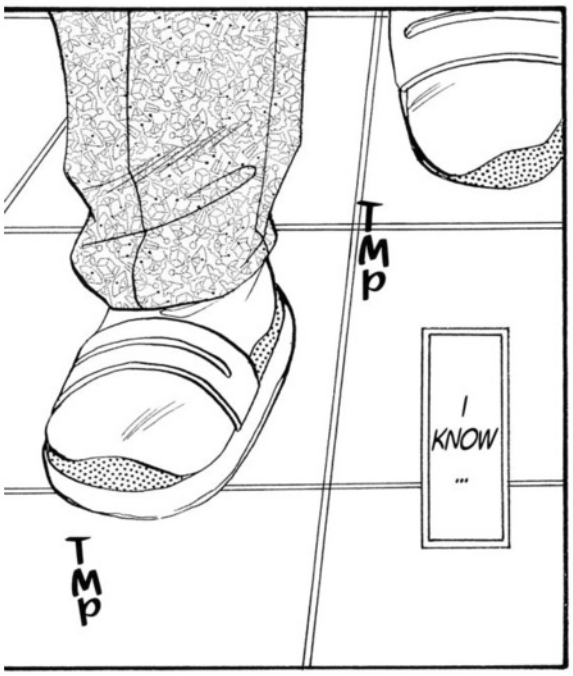

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE
...WHO CARES ...
WELL ...
1993 12 DECEMBER
Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat
My Birthday
DO YOU UNDER-STAND?
YES

DIRECTOR MUKAI...
KNOCK
KNOCK
YES?

THE CHILDREN AND TEACHERS BARELY KNOW ME.
IT'S NOT FAIR TO EXPECT THEM TO CEL-EBRATE MY BIRTHDAY.
... ABOUT BIRTH-DAYS, ANYWAY ?

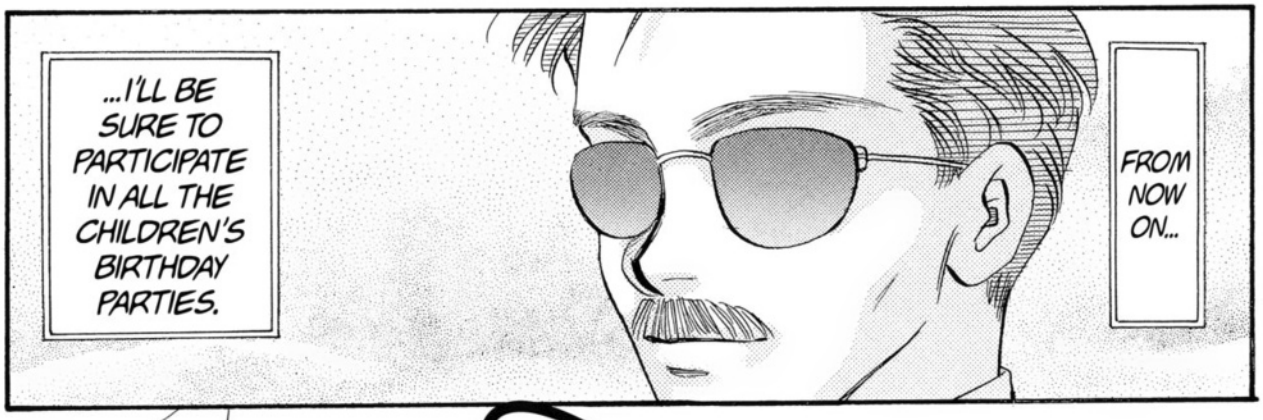
WOULD YOU COME INTO THE HALL, PLEASE?


MY BROTHER PROBABLY FORCES HIS PEOPLE TO DO IT FOR HIM.
BESIDES, I'VE NEVER HEARD OF ANYONE HAVING A PARTY FOR A DIRECTOR.

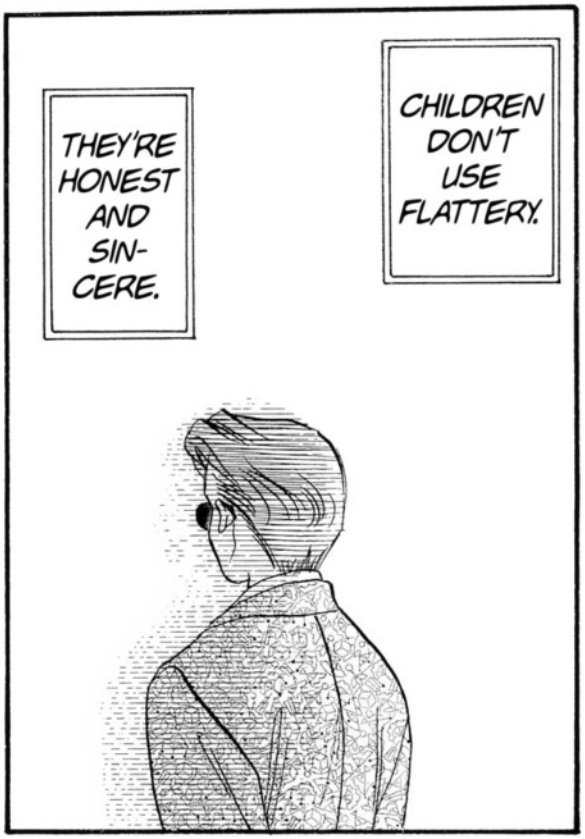

TMP
TMP
I KNOW ...

I MUSTN'T GET MY HOPES UP.
NO WAY...
KLAK

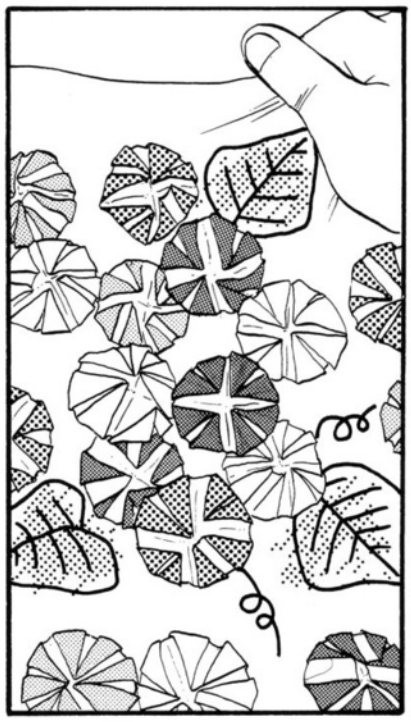
...


...I'LL BE SURE TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL THE CHILDREN'S BIRTHDAY PARTIES.
FROM NOW ON...

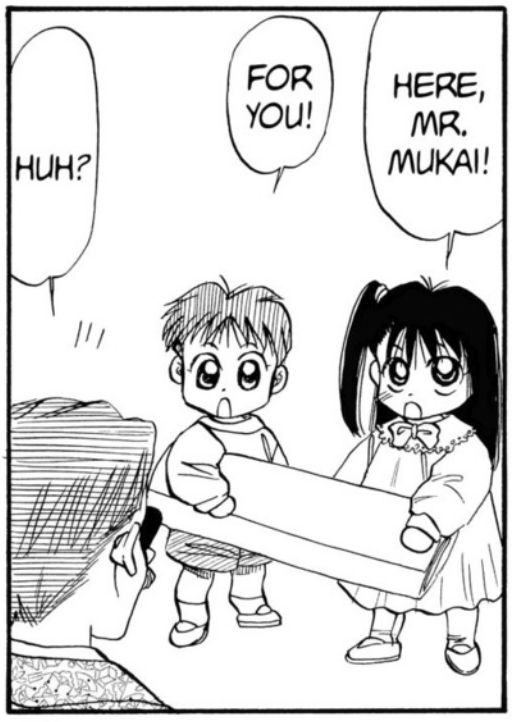
HAPPY BIRTH-DAY...
...MR. MUKAI!!
BOOM


THEY'RE HONEST AND SIN-CERE.
CHILDREN DON'T USE FLATTERY.

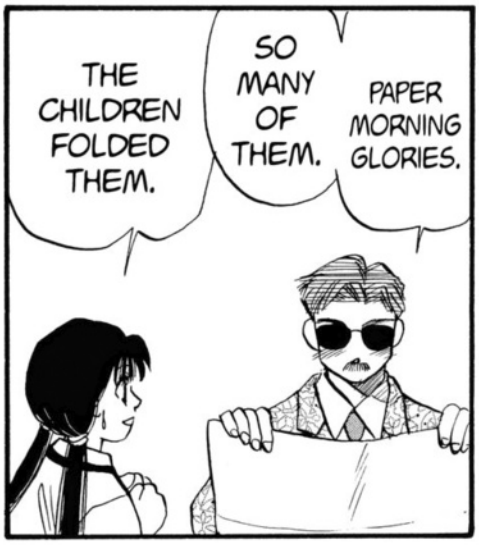
Happy Birthday, Director Mukai
WH-WHAT IN THE WORLD ...?
IT'S A BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR YOU, SIR.
WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME, SO IT'S NOT TOO FANCY.
But we can sing you Happy Birthday, at least.

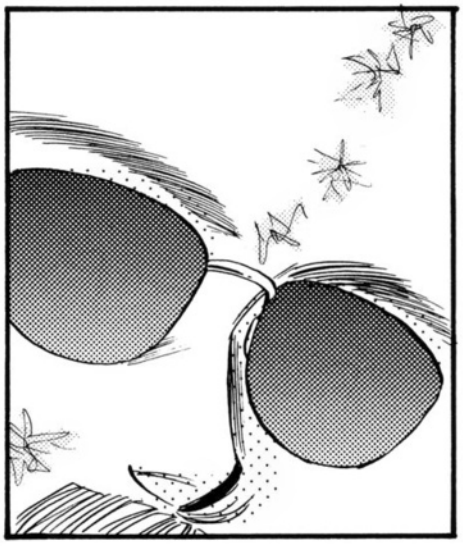


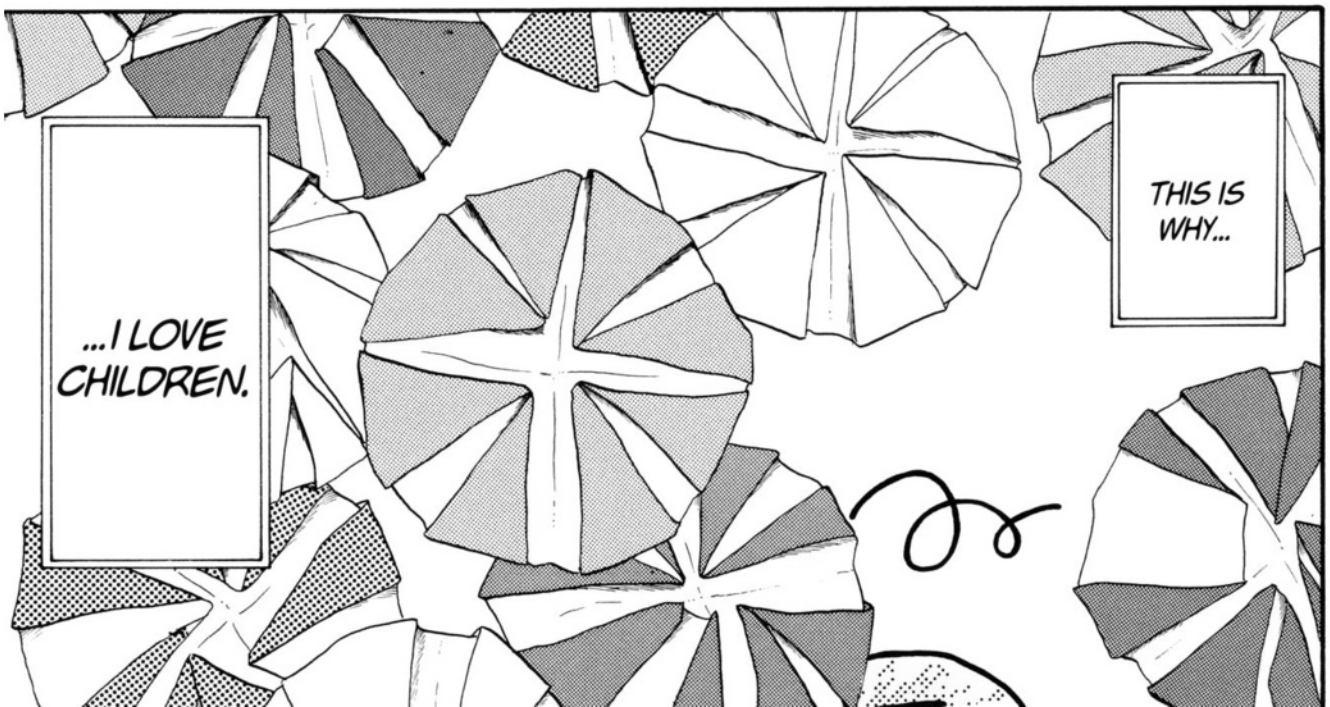
WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE?
OH, MY...
RUSTLE


HUH?
FOR YOU!
HERE, MR. MUKAI!

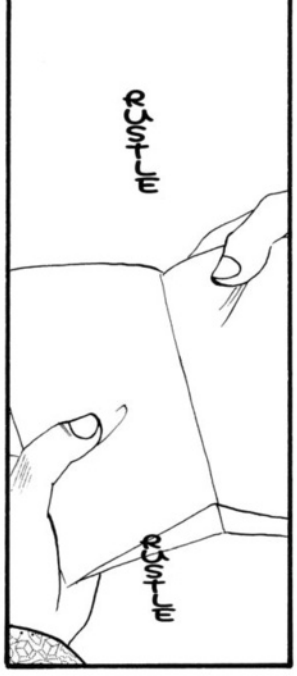
OH...I'M SO TOUCHED.
THIS ...

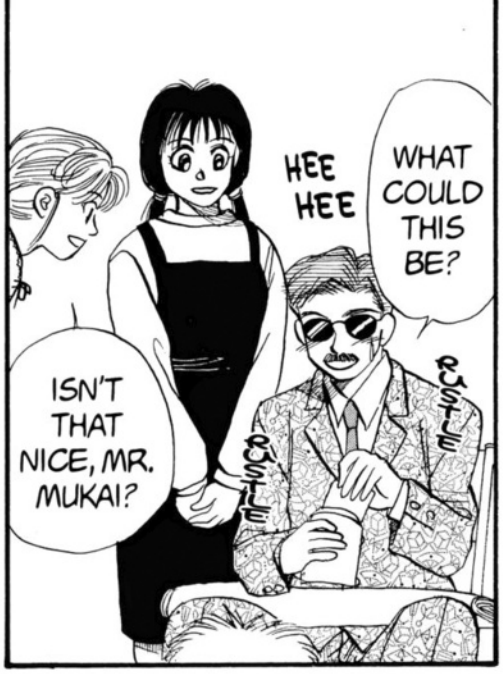

THE CHILDREN FOLDED THEM.
SO MANY OF THEM.
PAPER MORNING GLORIES.




THIS IS WHY...
...I LOVE CHILDREN.

AH...
...I'M GLAD I CHOSE THIS LINE OF WORK.
...BUT IT'S A LOT OF WORK FOR SMALL CHILDREN.
Happy birthday, Mr. Mukai!!
FOLDING THOSE FLOWERS WOULD BE EASY FOR GROWNUPS...
OVERWHELMED
THANK YOU.
YETH.
FOR ME?
HAPPY BOOFDAY.
HEAH.
I HAVE A GREAT GROUP OF TEACHERS.
HM?
TUP TUP TUP TUP
Wow
AND TAKUYA IS YOUR BIG BROTHER.
OH, YOU'RE MINORU, RIGHT?
Happy Birthday
Minoru &
Enoki

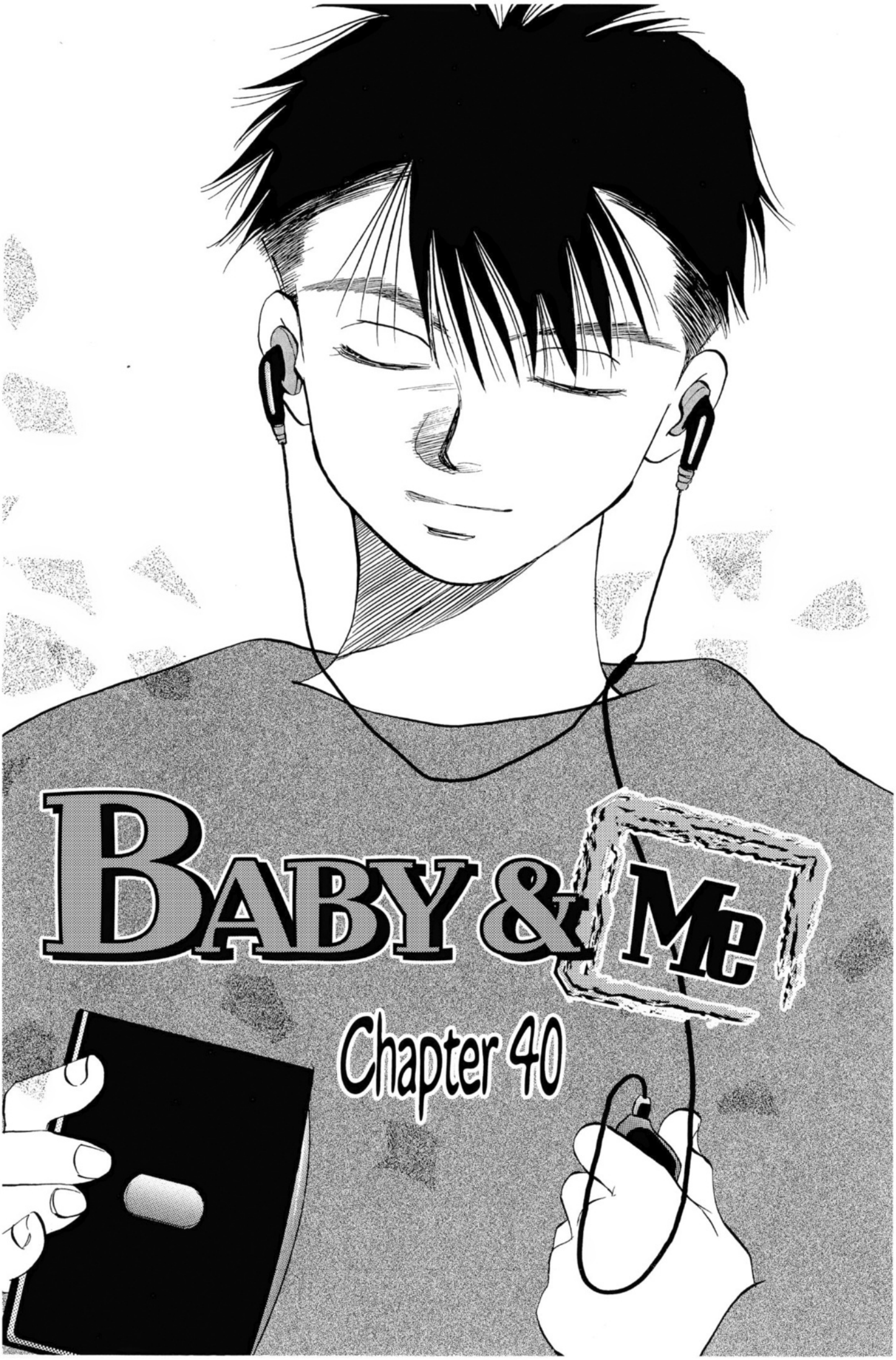


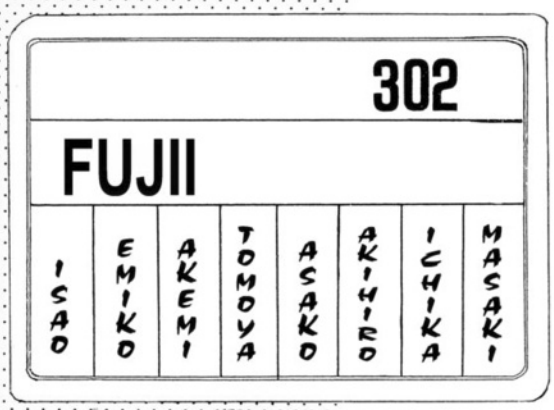


...I CHOSE THIS PROFESSION.

I'M SO GLAD...

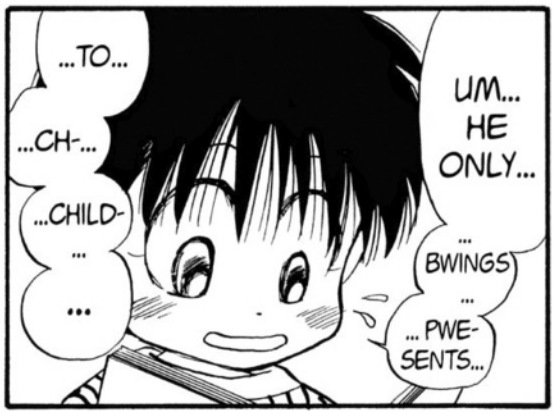
Chapter 39 / The End

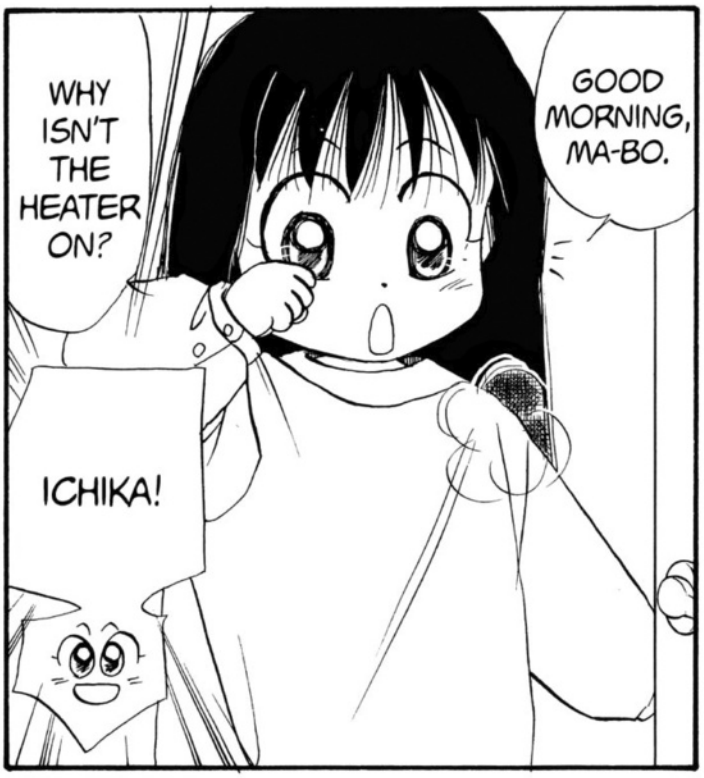

BABY & Me
Chapter 40



...IS ABOUT THE FUJII FAMILY.

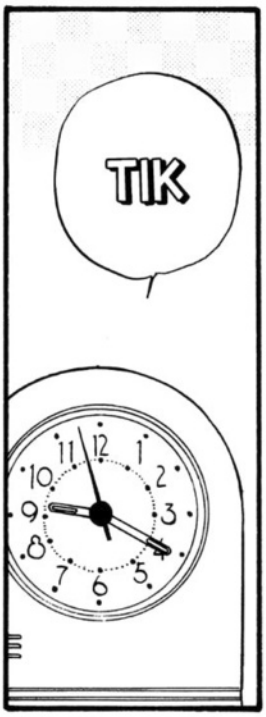
KLAK
!!


UM... HE ONLY...
...TO...
...CH-...
...CHILD-...
...
...BWINGS...
... PWE-SENTS...


GOOD MORNING, MA-BO.
WHY ISN'T THE HEATER ON?
ICHIKA!

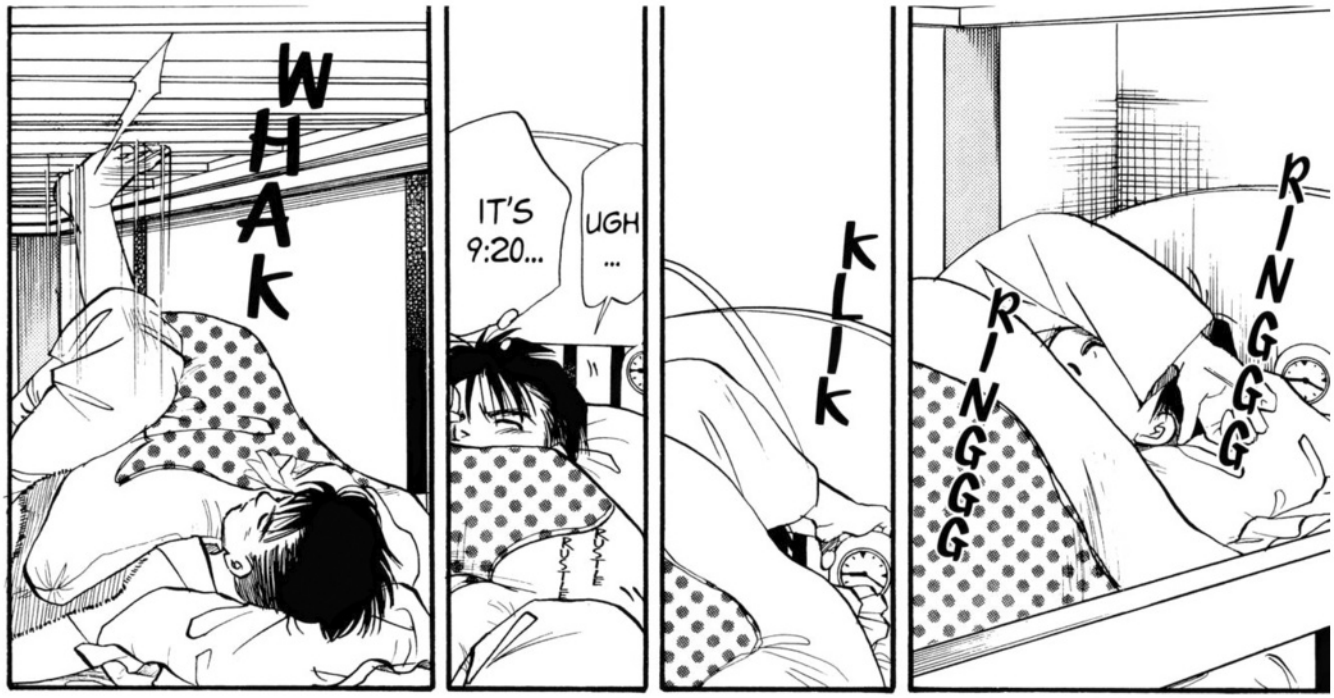
HUH? I CAN'T WEAD THAT. I'LL SKIP IT.
...WHO...
...ARE...
GOOD.
SANTA CLAUS IS COMING

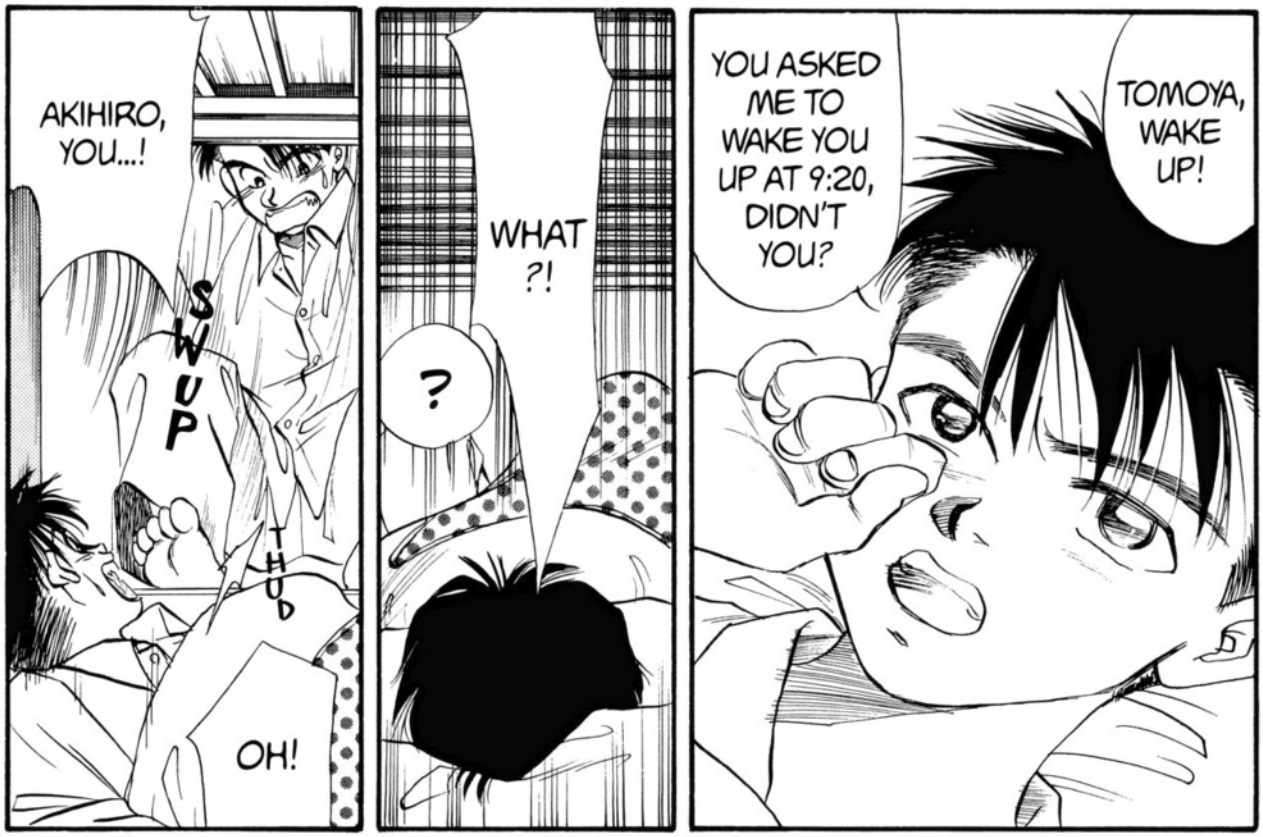
OH.
THEN I SHOULD GET ONE.
I'M A GOOD BOY.
SANTA CLAUS IS COMING

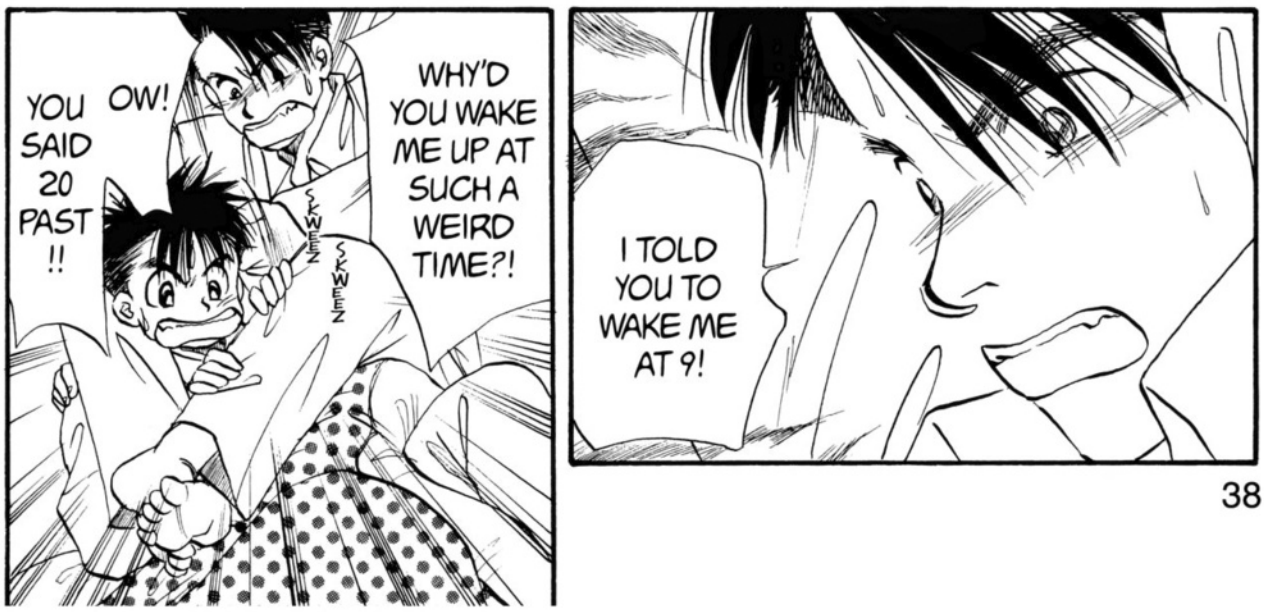

TIK

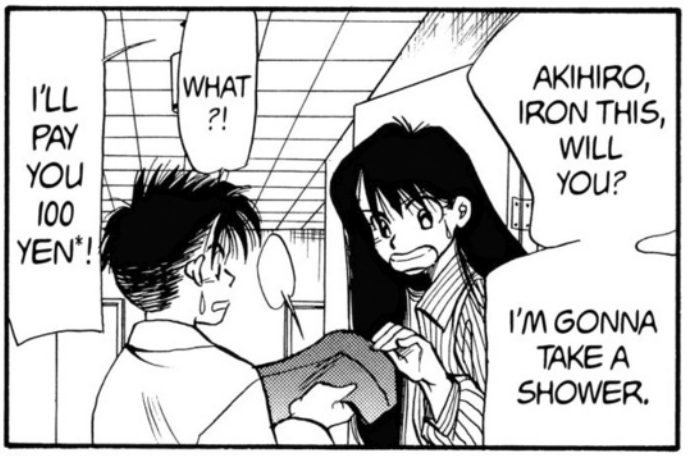
YOU'RE A GWOWNUP?
THAT'S RIGHT.

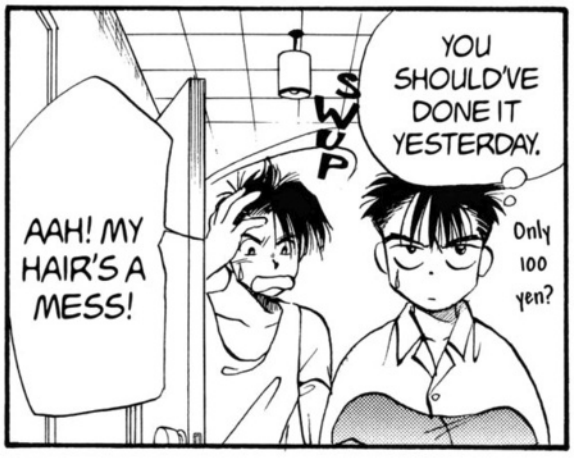
GUESS WHAT! GUESS WHAT!
TONIGHT, SANTA CWAUS--
HUMPH!
MA-BO, YOU'RE A KID SO YOUR BODY TEMPERA-TURE IS HIGH...
...BUT FOR A GROWNUP WOMAN LIKE MYSELF, IT'S TOO COLD!!
BEEP


RINGGG
RINGGGG
KLIK
UGH ...
IT'S 9:20...
KUSTE KUSTE
WHAK


TOMOYA, WAKE UP!
YOU ASKED ME TO WAKE YOU UP AT 9:20, DIDN'T YOU?
WHAT ?!
?
AKIHIRO, YOU...!
SWUP
THUD
OH!

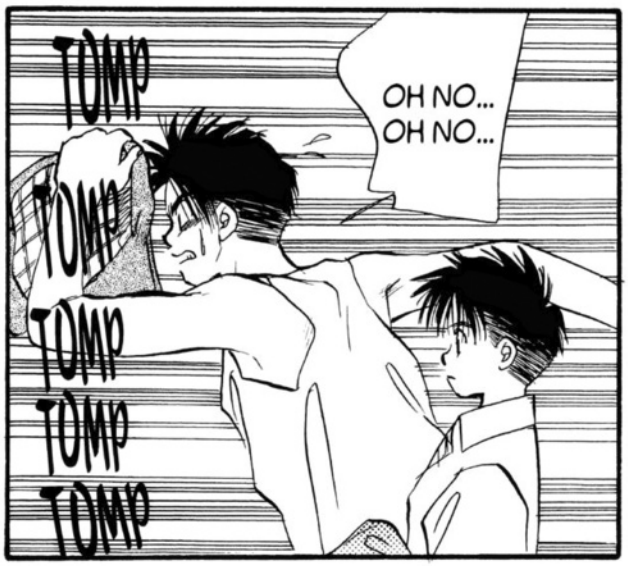

I TOLD YOU TO WAKE ME AT 9!
WHY'D YOU WAKE ME UP AT SUCH A WEIRD TIME?!
SKWEEZ
SKWEEZ
OW!
YOU SAID 20 PAST !!





*Approximately $0.80

TOMOYA...
...ASAKO'S IN--
KLAK
SLAM
SHINK


OH NO... OH NO...
TOMP
TOMP
TOMP
TOMP
TOMP
TOMP

ASAKO'S TAKING A SHOWER.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME SOONER?
WHAK

WOOSH

EEEK! YOU JERK!

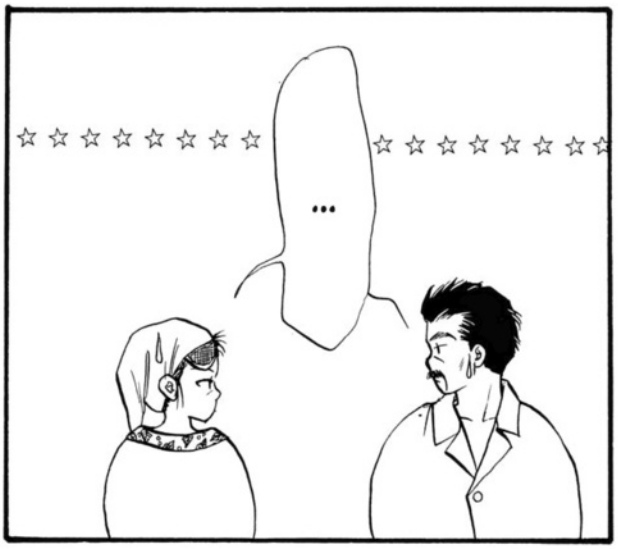
DAD, MOM ...
AKEMI SAYS SHE'S GOING OUT...
...SO SHE WANTS US TO HURRY UP AND EAT.
KLAK

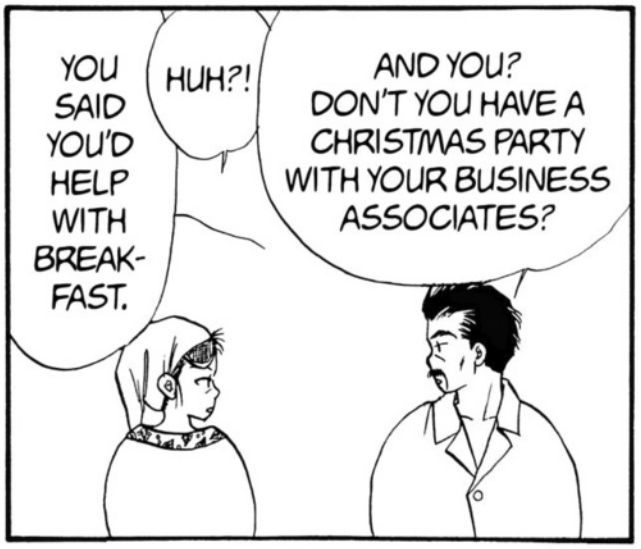
I TRIED TO!
COME ON, ASAKO!
HURRY UP, WILL YOU?!
KSHHH!

DEAR, YOU HAVE A LECTURE TODAY, DON'T YOU?
WHAT ?!

TWITCH
9:30?
WHUP

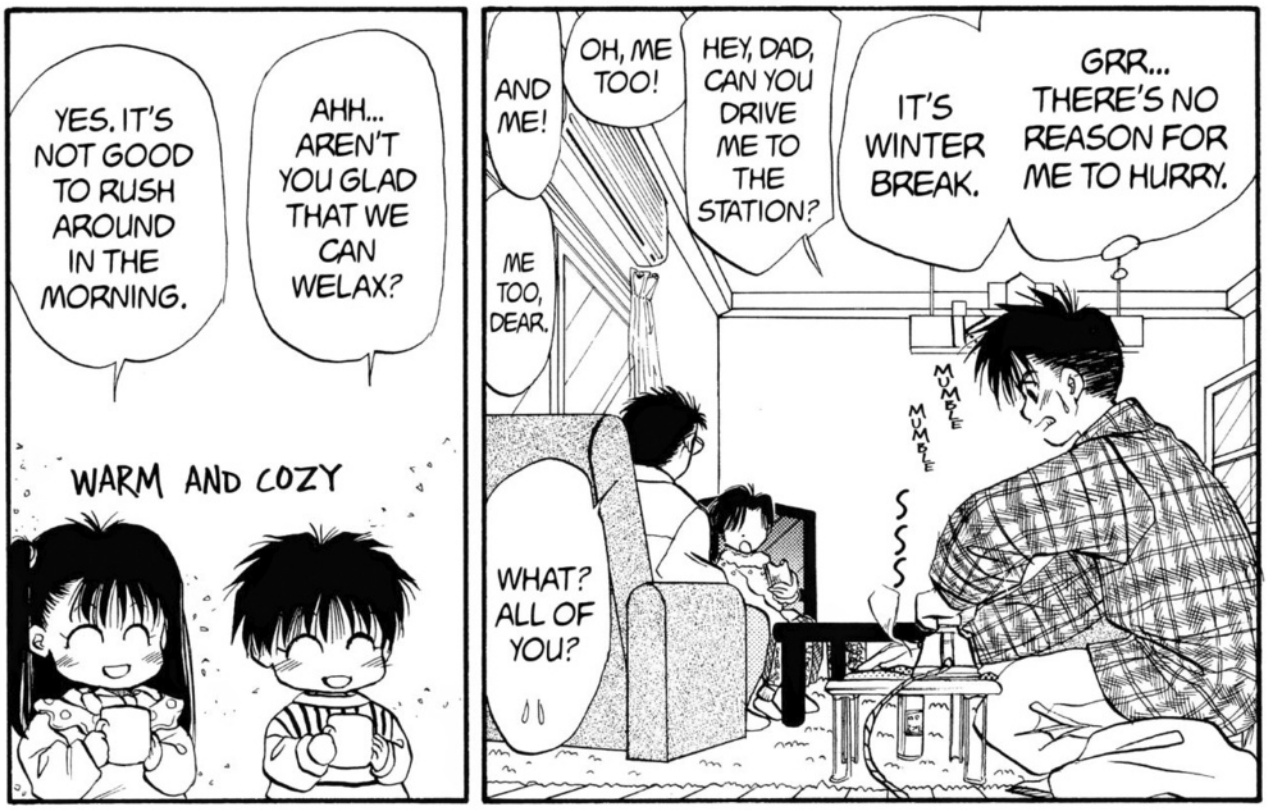
9:30.
WHAT TIME IS IT?
MM... IS THAT SO?
SNORE
SNORE


☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆
...

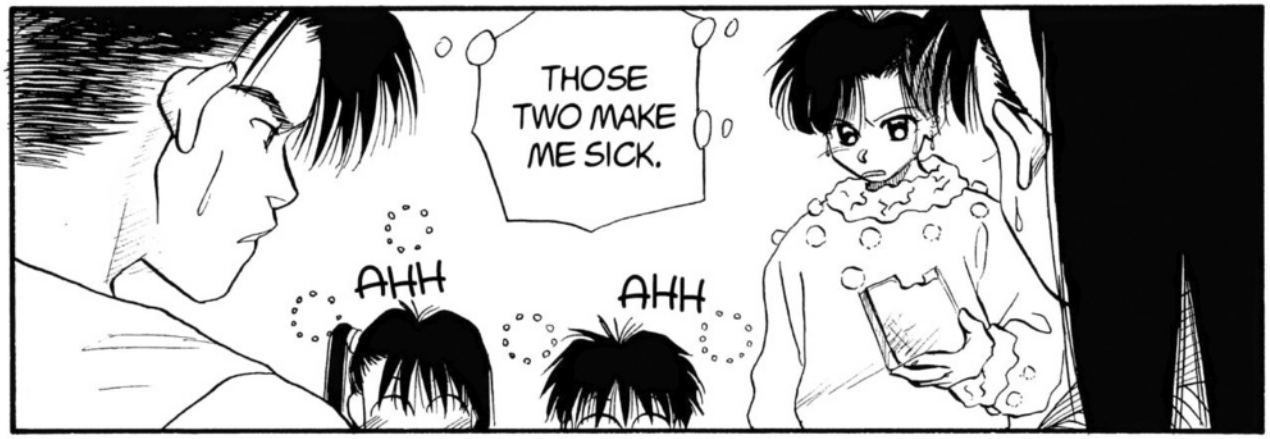

YOU SAID YOU'D HELP WITH BREAK-FAST.
HUH?!
AND YOU? DON'T YOU HAVE A CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH YOUR BUSINESS ASSOCIATES?

WHAT ABOUT ME?!
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE IN IKEBUKURO BY 10:30!
It's already 10...
I'M SUPPOSED TO BE IN SHINJUKU BY 11!
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...

WOOOO!

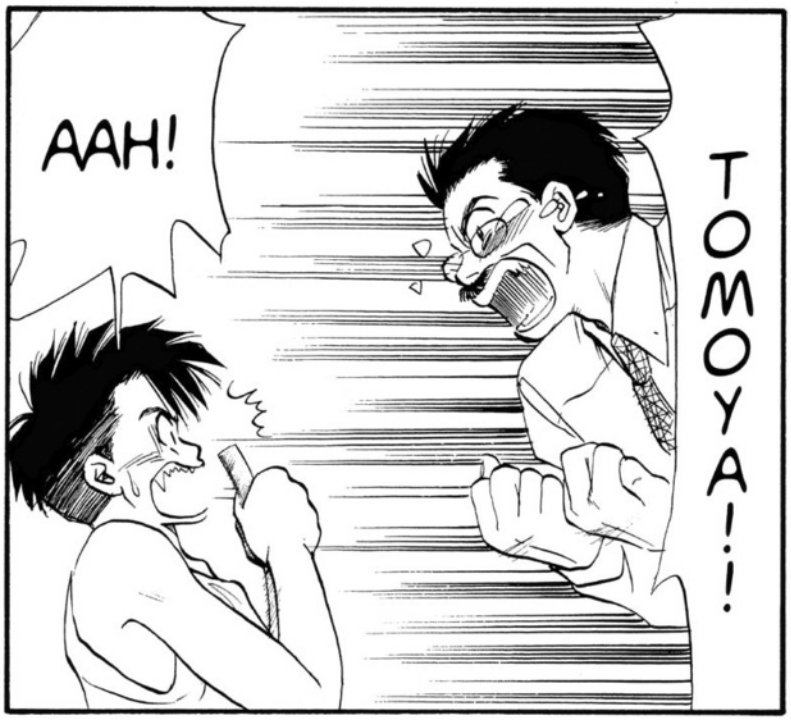

YES. IT'S NOT GOOD TO RUSH AROUND IN THE MORNING.
AHH... AREN'T YOU GLAD THAT WE CAN WELAX?
WARM AND COZY

AND ME!
OH, ME TOO!
HEY, DAD, CAN YOU DRIVE ME TO THE STATION?
IT'S WINTER BREAK.
GRR... THERE'S NO REASON FOR ME TO HURRY.
ME TOO, DEAR.
MUMBLE MUMBLE
WHAT? ALL OF YOU?


THOSE TWO MAKE ME SICK.
AHH
AHH

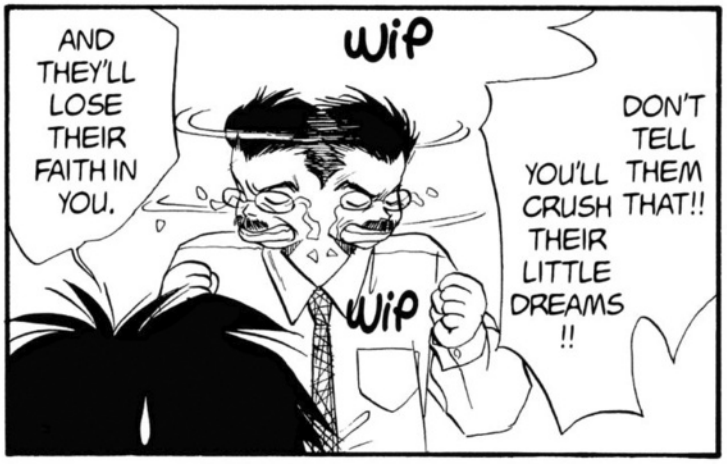
WHAT ?!
BUT MA-BO, WE DON'T HAVE A CHIMNEY.
HE'S GONNA PUT PWESENTS IN OUR STOCKINGS.
THEN HE'LL COME FROM THE WINDOW.
P-PRES-ENTS?

SANTA'S GONNA COME TONIGHT!


AAH!
TOMOYA!!

YOU BABIES !!
THAT'S NOT GONNA HAPPEN!
YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE THAT, IN THIS DAY AND AGE?! CLASSIC...
HA HA HA HA HA

AKIHIRO, HAVE YOU FINISHED IRONING MY CLOTHES?
YEAH.
ALL DONE.

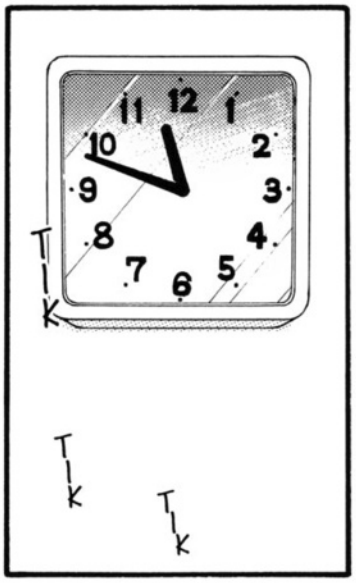

AND THEY'LL LOSE THEIR FAITH IN YOU.
WIP
WIP
DON'T TELL THEM THAT!! YOU'LL CRUSH THEIR LITTLE DREAMS !!

I'LL PULL THE CAR AROUND.
THIS IS NO FUN AT ALL.
HMPH. SOME CHRIST-MAS.
TROMP
TROMP
TROMP
TROMP
TROMP

SHUMP
WHAT ABOUT MINE, AKIHIRO?
AND MINE?
I DID 'EM ALL.
AKIHIRO, CLEAN UP.
OKAY.

HA HA HA HA
WUNN
WUNN
KLAK
KLAK
KSHHH

Isn't this the place?
Beats me.
HA


TIK
TIK
TIK

GLUMP...
HA
WUNN
YACK
YACK

ANYWAY, THE ONLY REASON I GET TO GO IS BECAUSE HAVING BOTH OF US AT HOME WOULD BE TOO MUCH TO HANDLE.
SORRY, MA-BO. THE FAMILY FINANCES ARE IN THE RED.
YOU'RE LUCKY. I WISH I COULD GO TO NURSEWY SCHOOL.

EVERYBODY ELSE IS OUT ENJOYING CHWISTMAS.
GLUMP
ICHIKA, I'M BORED.

WE'VE NEVER HAD ONE AT HOME, HAVE WE?
GLUMP
BUT WE DID HAVE A CHRISTMAS PARTY AT NURSERY SCHOOL YESTERDAY.
YEAH.

Author's Note 2

The parents of my sister's fiancé, Devil Fujino, spoil Yoshizo almost beyond belief. Below is proof...

I might be right inside, so please open and close the door carefully.

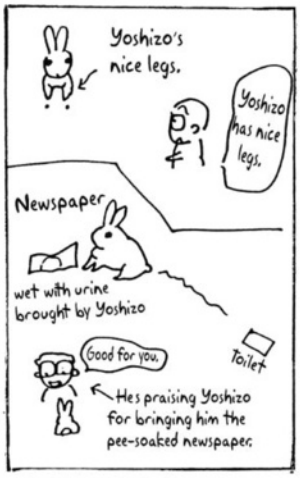
Yoshizo

▲ Written by Devil's dad (a high school teacher). It was stuck to the door of his room.

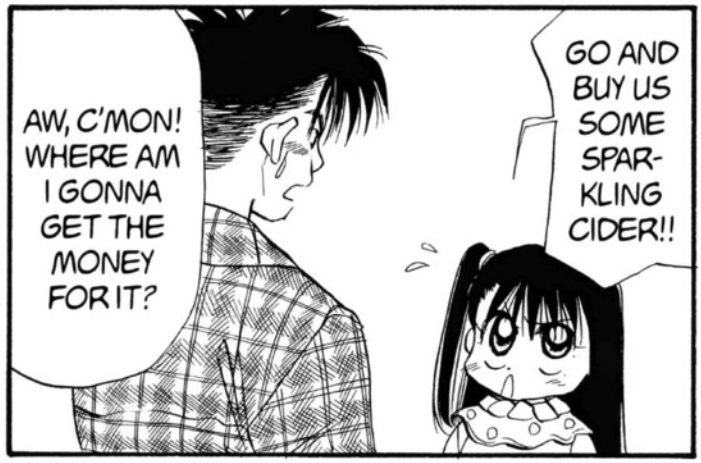
MEMO

I have kidnapped Yoshizo. Pay me a ransom!! Ha ha ha...

▲ Written by Devil's mom. This was on the door to my workroom the day she took Yoshizo out without my permission.



▲ My sister's drawings showing what Devil's dad had done.


AW, C'MON! WHERE AM I GONNA GET THE MONEY FOR IT?
GO AND BUY US SOME SPARKLING CIDER!!

WE DON'T HAVE THE INGREDIENTS.
AND EVEN IF WE DID, I WOULDN'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE ONE.
THEN ROAST A TURKEY.
HOW 'BOUT I ROAST YOU?!

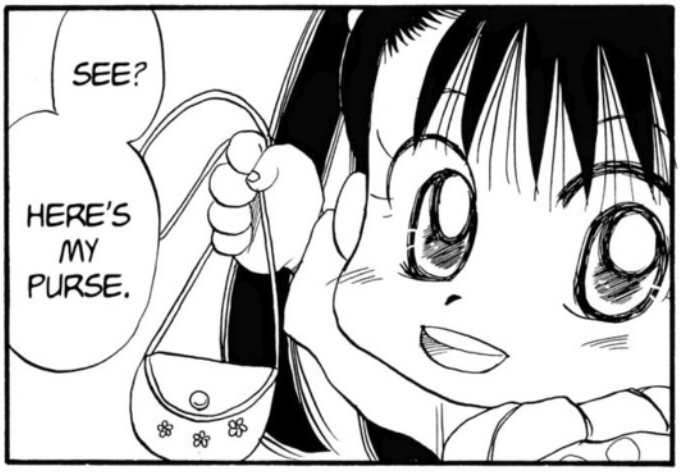
CHEAP-SKATE.
I'M NOT BEING CHEAP!
Hmph!

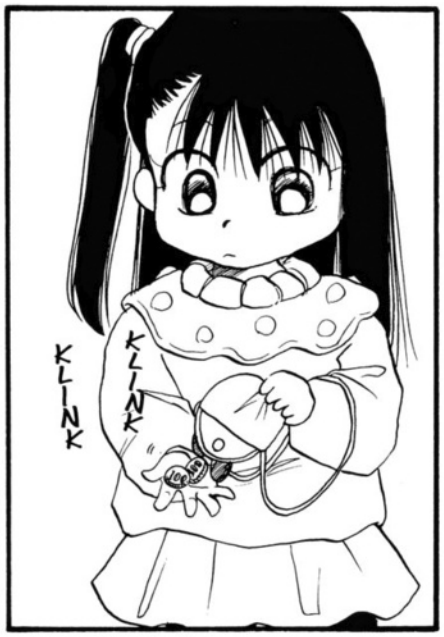
POOR THING. EVERYONE RUNS HIM RAGGED. THIS IS HIS ONLY CHANCE TO RELAX.
YOU'RE WIGHT.
I THINK I'M GONNA PUKE.

WHAT? COME AND PLAY WITH US, AKIHIWO.
NO.

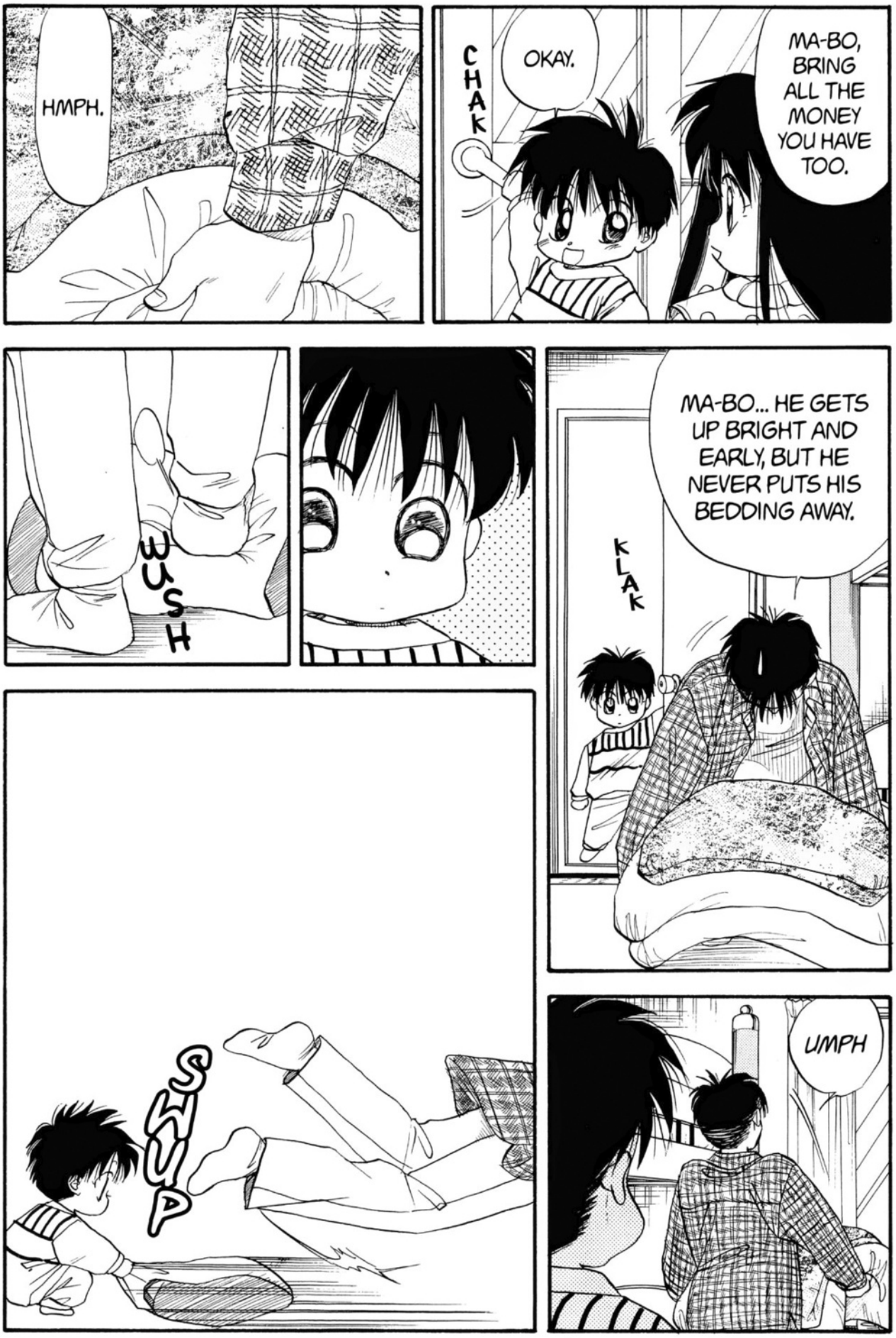
NO, MA-BO. AKIHIRO'S TIRED. WE HAVE TO LET HIM REST.
YEAH.

I'LL BE IN MY ROOM.
CALL ME IF THERE'S A FIRE.





*Approximately $1.80

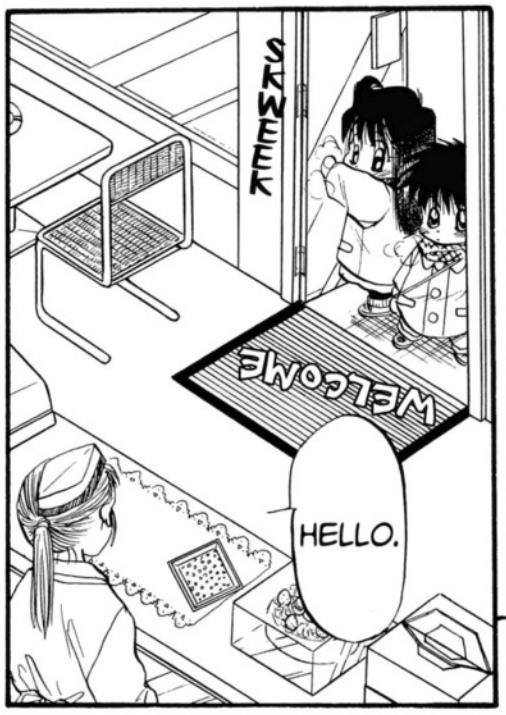

HMPH.
CHAK
OKAY.
MA-BO, BRING ALL THE MONEY YOU HAVE TOO.
WUSH
MA-BO... HE GETS UP BRIGHT AND EARLY, BUT HE NEVER PUTS HIS BEDDING AWAY.
KLAK
SWUP
UMPH

*Approximately $1.50

KLAK
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
UM... TO SAKAE SHOPPING MALL.
COME RIGHT BACK, OKAY?
OKAY.

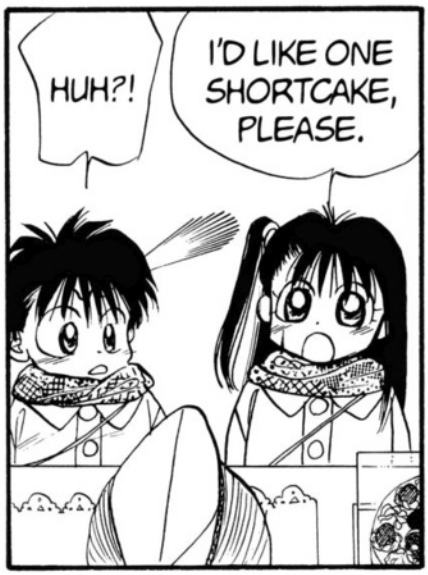
AKIHIRO ...
WE'RE GOING SHOP-PING.

I SEE A CAKE SHOP!!
WE'RE GONNA BUY A CAKE!

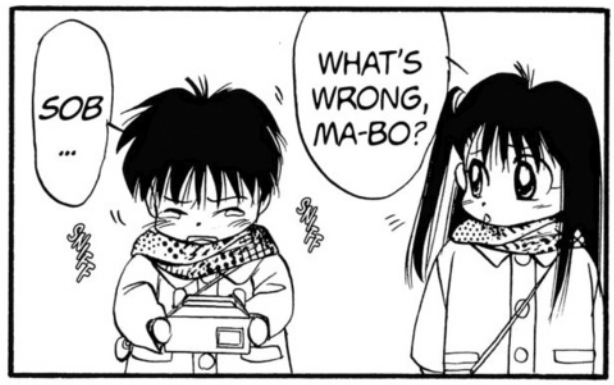

SWEET
WELCOME
HELLO.

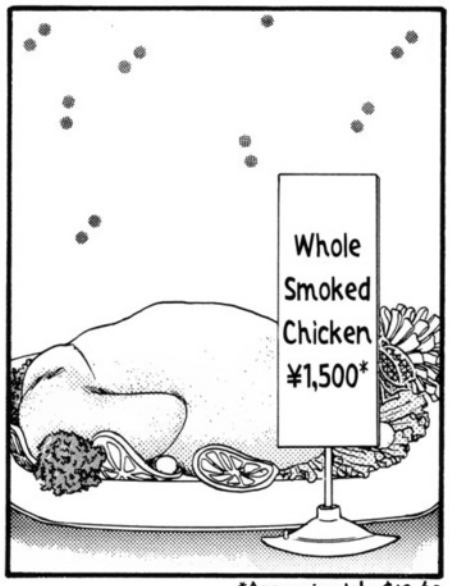
SAKAE SHOPPING MALL
RECORDS & CDS
SHOP
WE'RE GOING OUT! WE'RE GOING OUT!
THIS IS SO MUCH FUN!
WE'RE WALKING TOGETHER, HAND IN HAND.

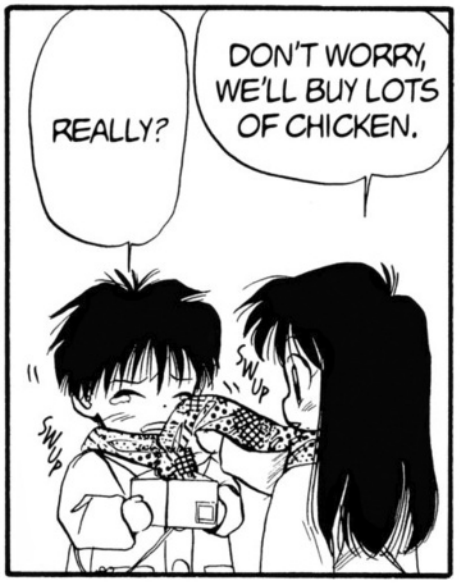
*Approximately $20.50



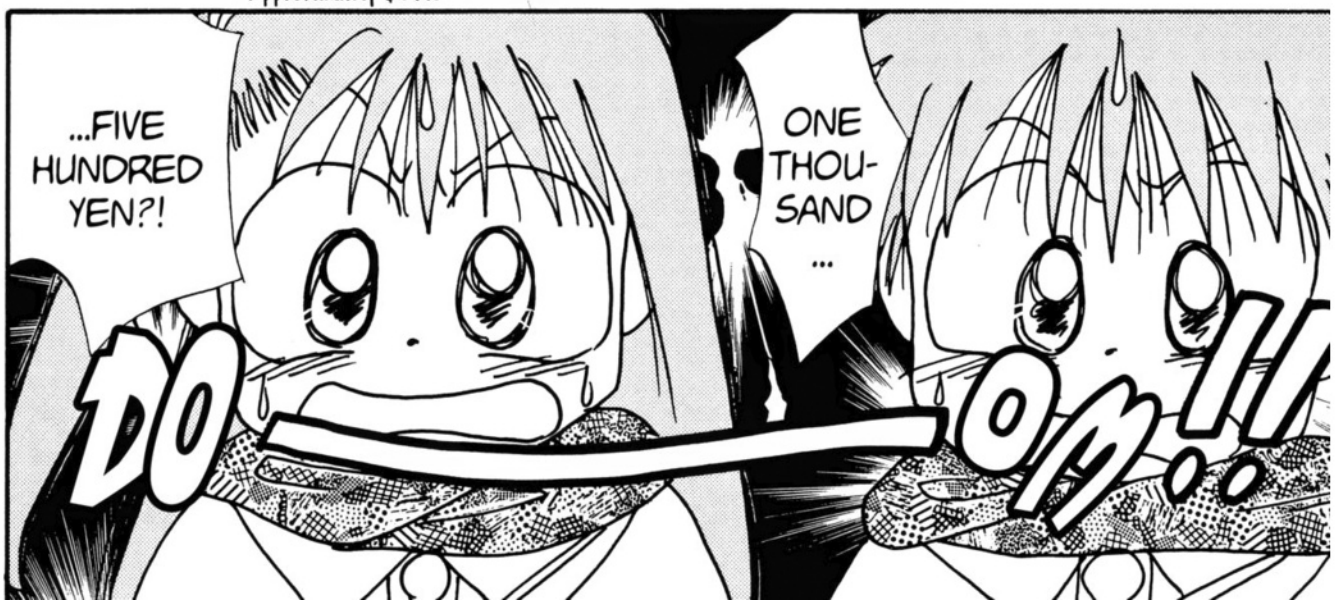
*Approximately $2.30







*Approximately $12.40



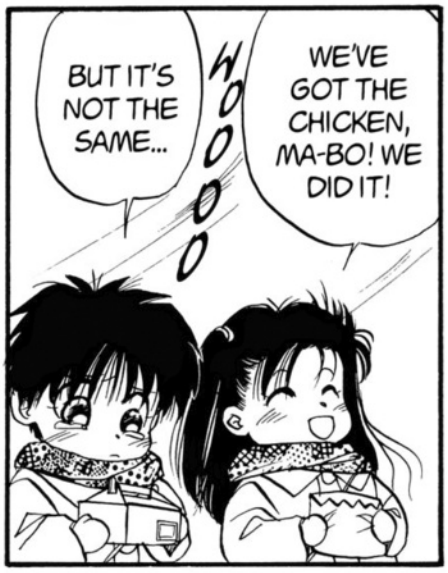
HEY ...
MA-BO, WE CAN BUY THESE. THEY'RE ONLY 50 YEN.
They look good...

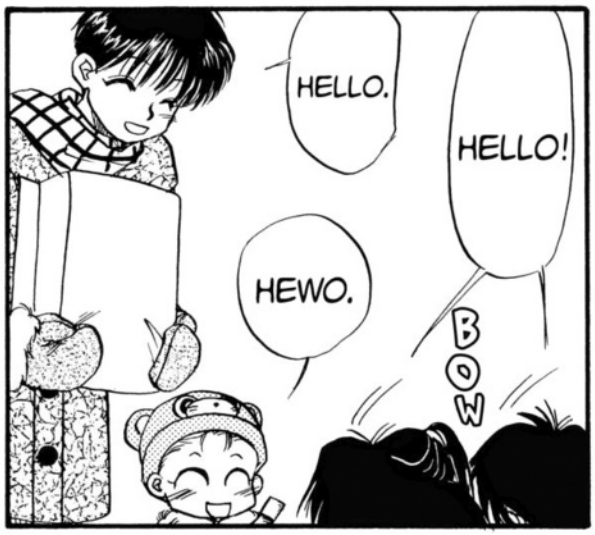
WHAT'LL WE DO, MA-BO? WE ONLY HAVE 100 YEN LEFT.
IT'S EXPEN-SIVE.

MA'AM... THIS...
HUH?
I'D LIKE TWO OF THESE 50-YEN PIECES PLEASE.
OH, THE WING-TIPS?

TUP TUP TUP

SURE IT IS!!
WE'VE GOT CAKE AND CHICKEN!
IS IT?
SURE !!
WUNN
WUNN
PHARMAC
SHOP
ASH


WE'VE GOT THE CHICKEN, MA-BO! WE DID IT!
WOOOOO
BUT IT'S NOT THE SAME...


HELLO!
HELLO.
HEWO.
BOW

HEY, IT'S ICHIKA AND MA-BO.
MINORU AND TAKUYA!
TUP TUP TUP

NO, IT'S FINE.
IT'S NOT TOO HEAVY, IS IT?
THANK YOU!

OH! IT'S SPAR-KLING CIDER!!
WE ALREADY HAVE A BOTTLE THAT WE BOUGHT.
WOULD YOU LIKE IT?

OH, UM...
WE JUST WON THIS AT THE INSTANT LOTTERY, BUT...
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

UM...
HUH?

BWUZA, HEBBY...
YOU'RE ONLY CARRYING ONE BOTTLE, MINORU.
...

WELL ...
TWINKLE
TWINKLE

HUH?

IS SANTA COMING?

BUT YOU KNOW WHAT ?
IF YOU BELIEVE IN HIM, HE'LL BE REAL IN YOUR HEART.
I BELIEVE THAT.
HMM ...
Huh?
I DON'T KNOW IF HE'S COMING OR NOT ...
...OR EVEN IF THERE IS A SANTA.
YOU DON'T KNOW?
WE'RE HOME.
UBB ...
HUH?
WOW, IM-PRES-SIVE...

HUH?
WHAT IS IT?
STARE
BIG COMIC

GUESS WHAT! WE SAW MINORU AND HIS BIG BROTHER...
...AND THEY GAVE US SOME SPARKLING CIDER.
HIS BIG BROTHER ?
TAKUYA GAVE IT TO YOU?
KLAK

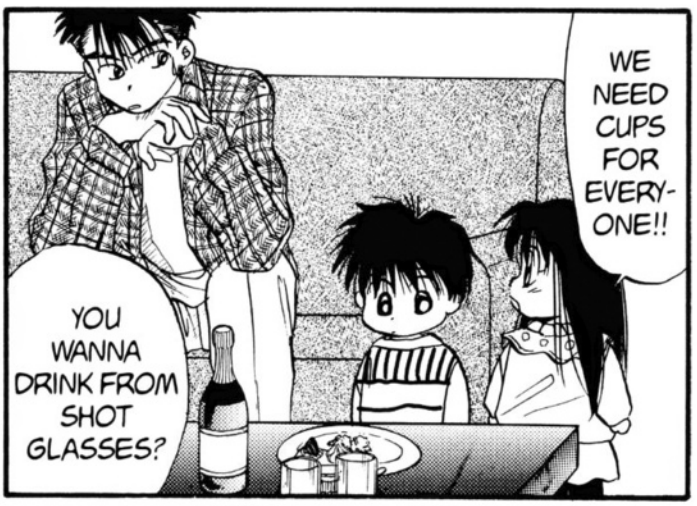
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
TAKUYA TOOK HIS LITTLE BROTHER SHOPPING WITH HIM.

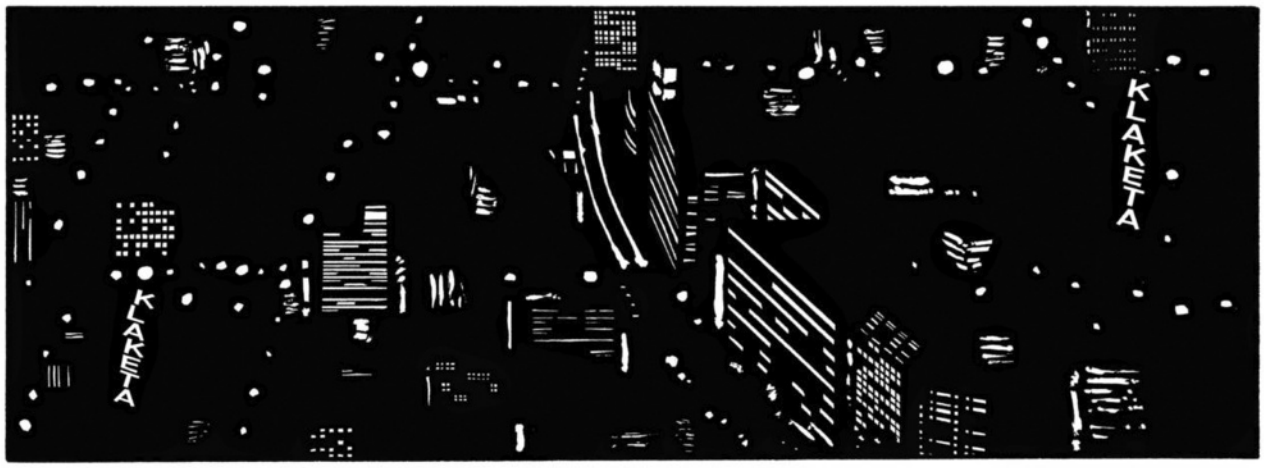
KEROMI

GET READY FOR A PARTY?

UM... WE HAVE CAKE, CHICKEN, AND SPARKLING CIDER...
...SO WILL YOU GET READY FOR A PARTY?

HMM... SOMETHING'S MISSING.
IT'S KINDA SAD.
ARE THESE TWO SERIOUS?


WE NEED CUPS FOR EVERYONE!!
YOU WANNA DRINK FROM SHOT GLASSES?


KLAKETA
KLAKETA

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS FOR ICHIKA AND MA-BO.

UM... WHAT'S IN THE BAG?
OH, TOMOYA.
KLAKETA
KLAKETA

ASAKO ...
KLAKETA
KLAKETA

...
I FELT SORRY FOR THEM. THEY BELIEVE IN SANTA CLAUS.

...BUT YOU HAD A BAG TOO, SO I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT'VE BOUGHT SOMETHING ALREADY.
THAT'S GREAT. I WAS GONNA HIT YOU UP FOR A CONTRIBUTION...
HEH HEH
THIS ?

REALLY ?
CAN I PAY FOR HALF OF THOSE PRESENTS?
SMILE

STOP THAT. IT'S WEIRD.
...LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING.
SO, ASAKO ...
SNUGGLE

WHY?
CAN WE STOP BY A TOY STORE?

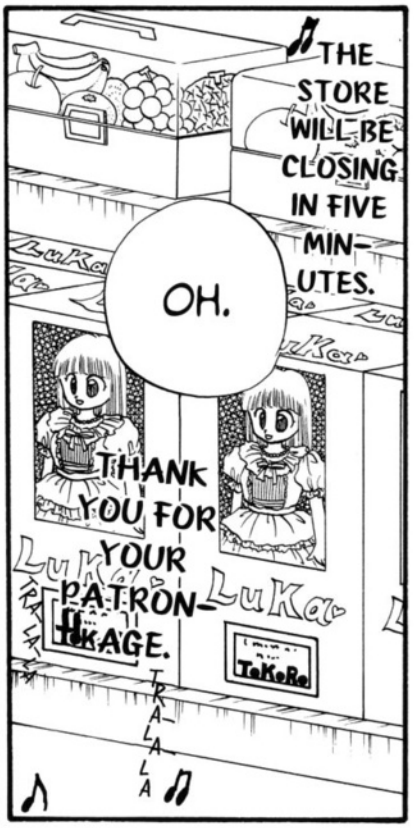
AYA
WUZZ
WUZZ
WUZZ

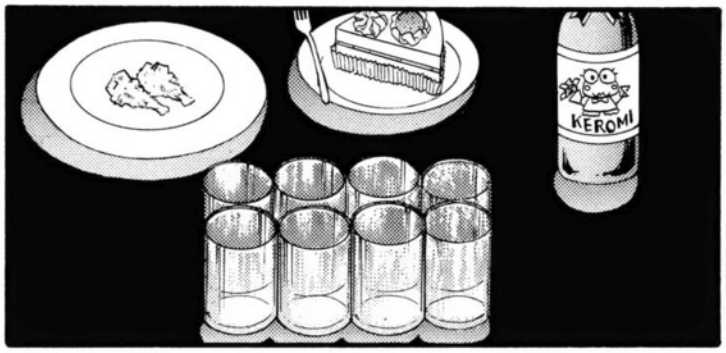
HMPH. AND I WAS HANGING OUT WITH MY GIRL-FRIENDS.
YOUR GIRL-FRIEND?
SHE KNITTED ME A CAP AND SWEATER, SHE SAYS.
I HATE IT. EVERY-WHERE I LOOK THERE ARE COUPLES!!

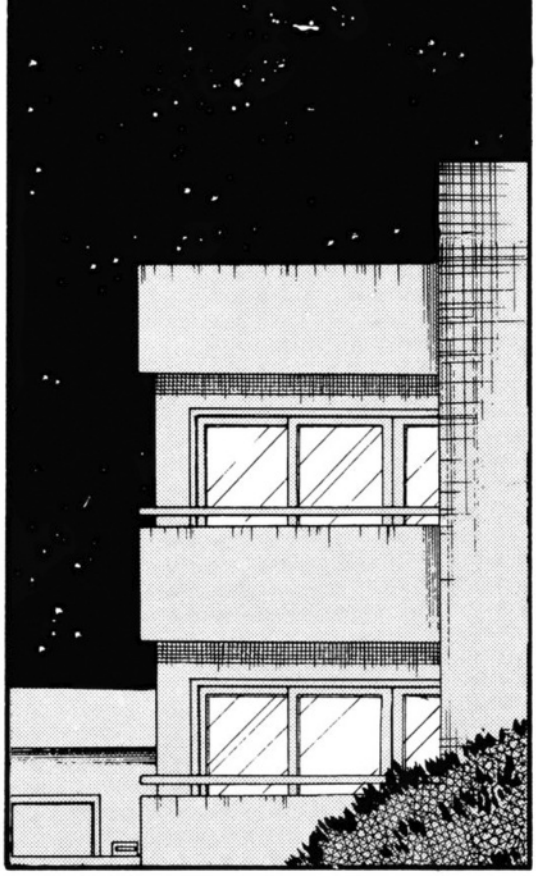
DO I HAVE TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING FOR EVERY HOLIDAY?
IF YOU GET TOO MANY PRESENTS, THEY'LL BE IN THE WAY.
BUT WHAT ABOUT ME? DON'T I GET A PRES-ENT?

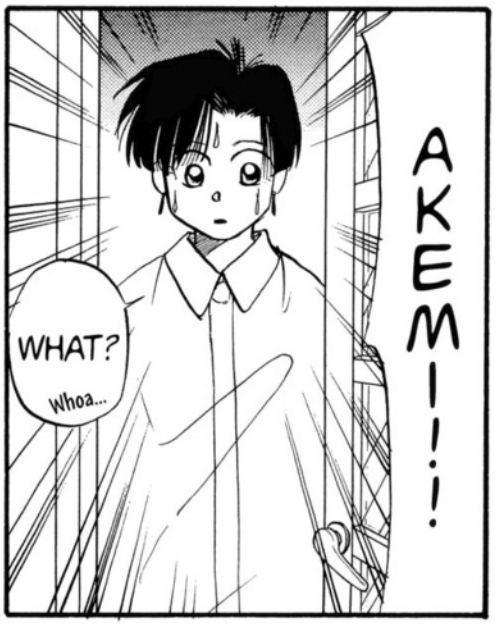
I WANT TO BUY SOME PRESENTS FOR MY LITTLE BROTHER AND SISTER. I HOPE IT'S NOT TOO LATE.
THE BOOKSTORE'S OPEN. YOU COULD BUY THEM SOME STORYBOOKS.

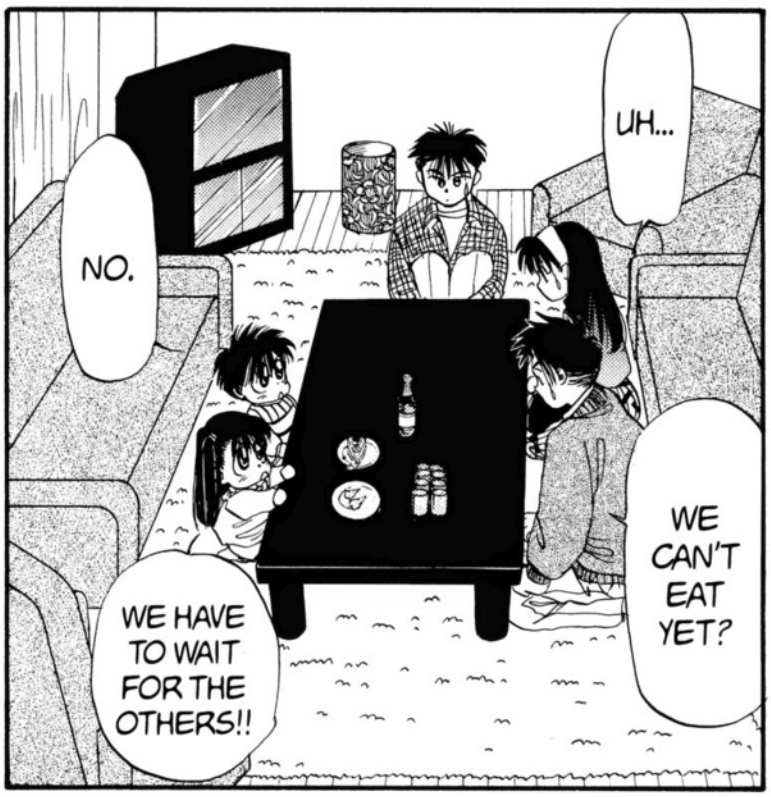
YOU BOUGHT SOME-THING, TOO?
WE LOOK FOR-WARD TO YOUR NEXT VISIT.
YOU BOUGHT SOME-THING, DEAR?
TRALALA
TRALALA
LuKa
TOYS PIEROT


THE STORE WILL BE CLOSING IN FIVE MIN-UTES.
OH.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATRON-AGE.
LuKa
TaKeRe
TRALALA


KEROMI

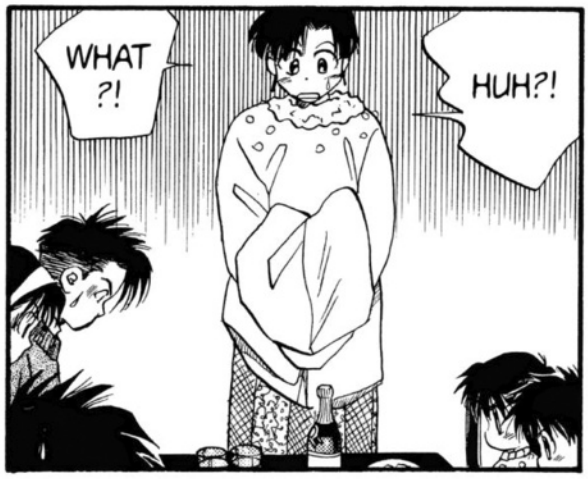


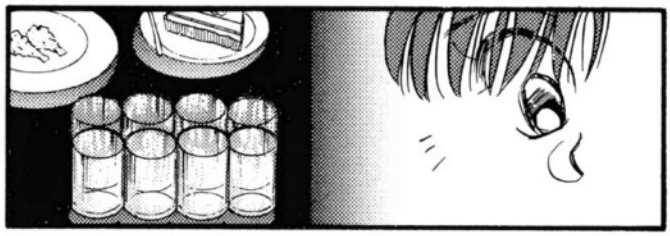

AKEMI!!!
WHAT?
whoa...


UH...
NO.
WE CAN'T EAT YET?
WE HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE OTHERS!!

WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.
WHAT FOR?

KLAK
!!


WHAT ?!
HUH?!



NO...
AKEMI ...
WHAT ARE THOSE GLASSES DOING OUT?!
HEY, WHAT'S GOING ON?

I RAN INTO YOUR MOTHER ON THE WAY HOME.
WE'RE HOME!
KLAK

...

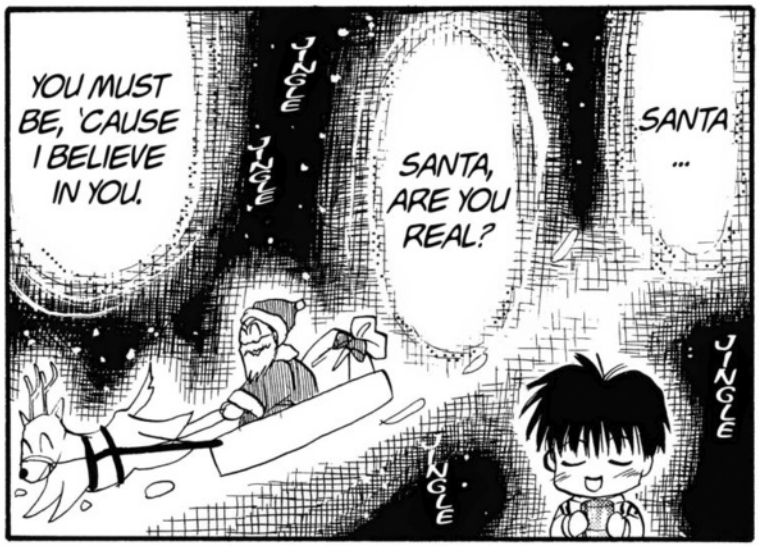
YOU SEEM A LITTLE DOWN.
OH? WHAT'S WRONG?
GLOOM ~~~..

HUH?
WHAT'S THE CAKE AND CHICKEN FOR?

ICHIKA AND MA-BO, HURRY UP AND EAT IT UP.
!!
BUH...
SOB
YOU'RE MEAN!
WE DID ALL THIS...
...FOR THE PARTY!

*Approximately $3.30

AND SO...
MERRY CHRISTMAS!
HO HO HO
HO..

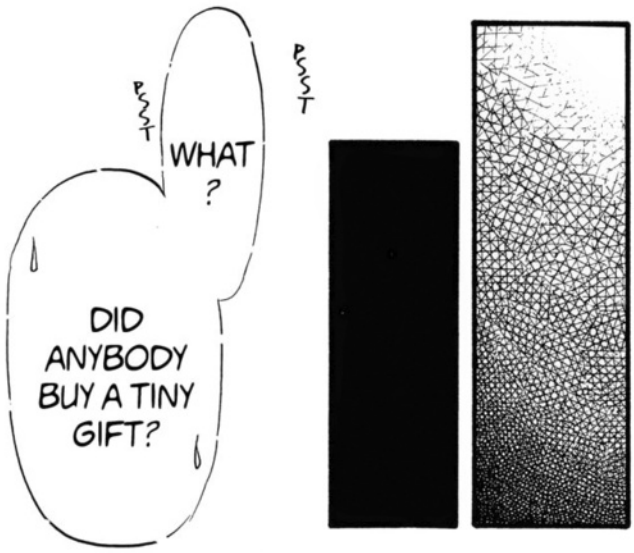

SANTA ...
SANTA, ARE YOU REAL?
YOU MUST BE, 'CAUSE I BELIEVE IN YOU.
JINGLE
JINGLE
JINGLE
JINGLE

THIS IS GOOD.
SANTA...
EVEWY-BODY'S HAPPY.
HEE

WHAT ?!
GASp

...WILL THERE BE PWESENTS IN MY SOCK?
TO-MOR-ROW MOWN-ING...
DING

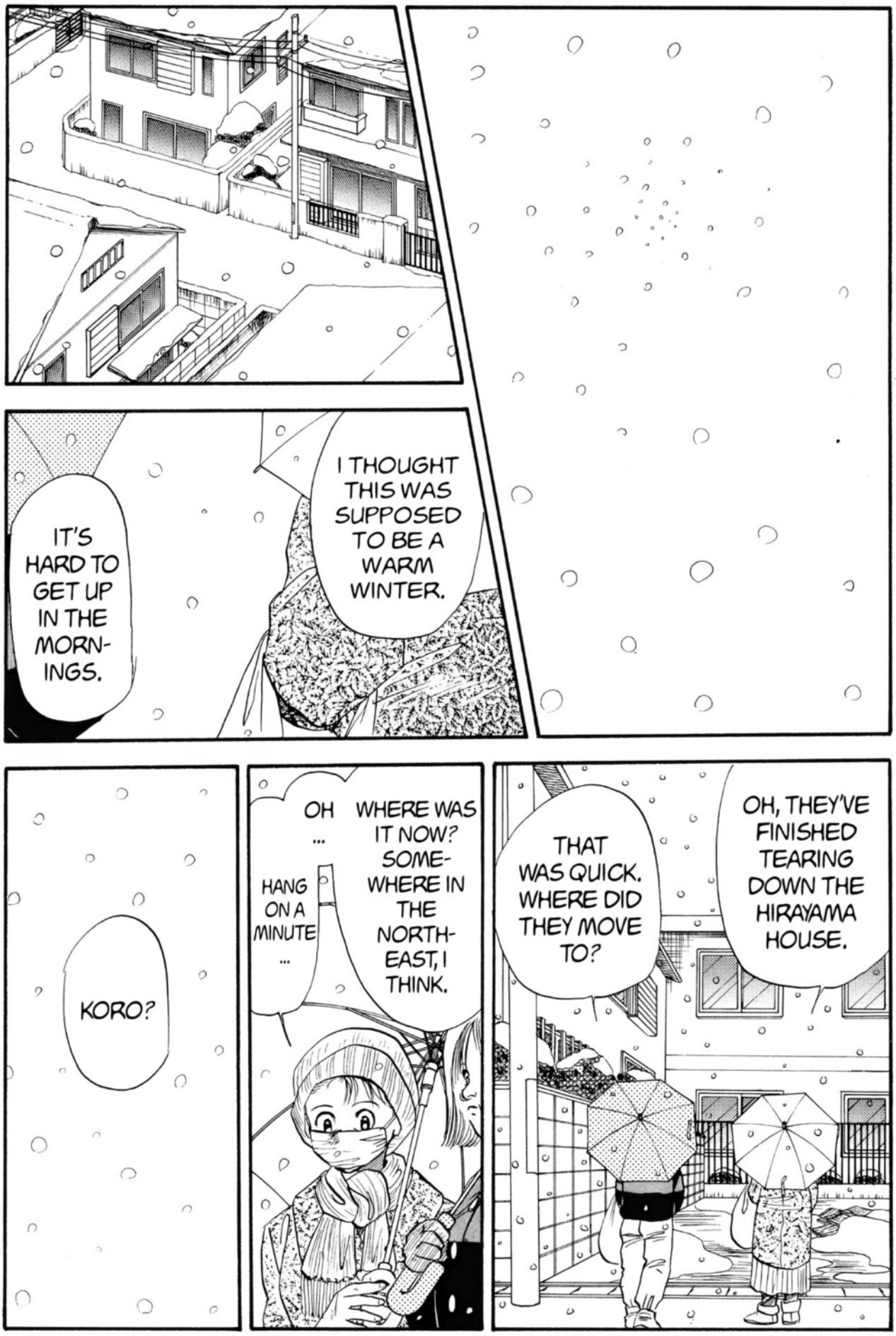
WILL SANTA COME TONIGHT?
YES, HE WILL. HE'LL BRING YOU SOME PRESENTS.

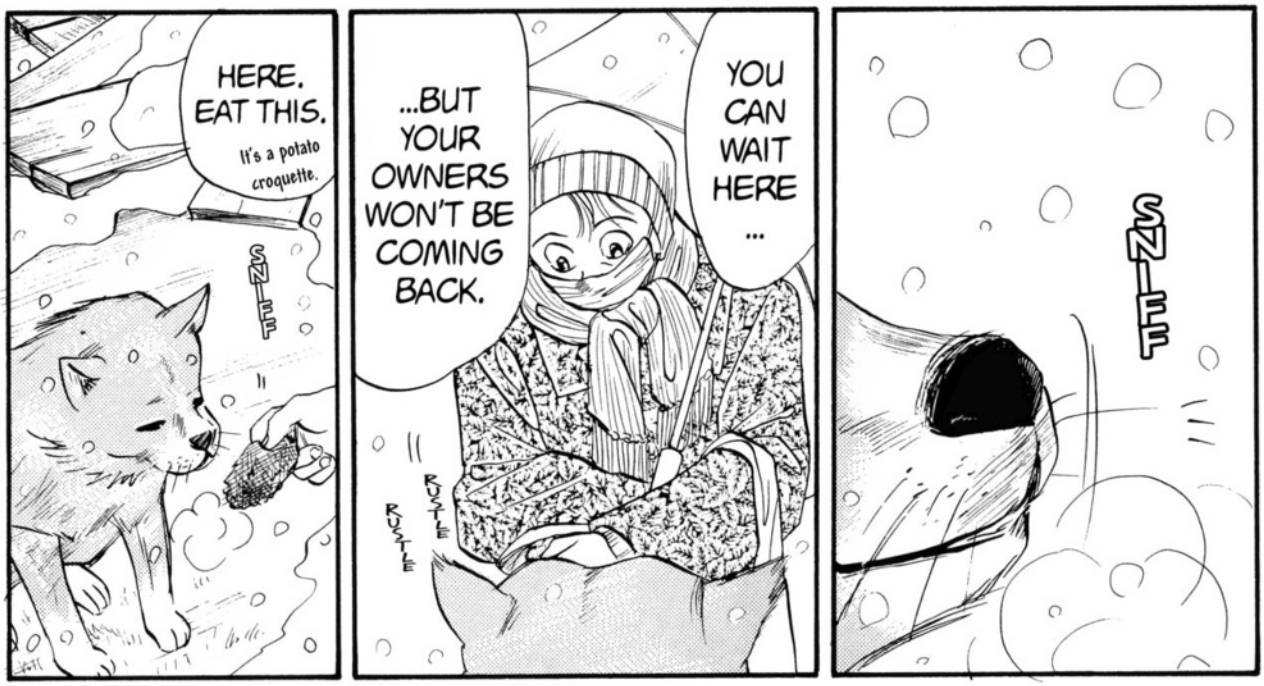


Chapter 40 / The End

BABY & Me

Chapter 41


I THOUGHT THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A WARM WINTER.
IT'S HARD TO GET UP IN THE MORNINGS.
KORO?
OH ...
HANG ON A MINUTE ...
WHERE WAS IT NOW? SOMEWHERE IN THE NORTHEAST, I THINK.
THAT WAS QUICK. WHERE DID THEY MOVE TO?
OH, THEY'VE FINISHED TEARING DOWN THE HIRAYAMA HOUSE.


SNIFF
YOU CAN WAIT HERE ...
...BUT YOUR OWNERS WON'T BE COMING BACK.
RUSTLE RUSTLE
HERE. EAT THIS.
It's a potato croquette.
SNIFF

HOW COULD THEY DO THIS?
THEY'VE OWNED KORO FOR YEARS. HOW COULD THEY LEAVE HIM BEHIND?
SNIFF
SNIFF
KORO'S VERY OLD.
I CAN'T STAND TO SEE HIM WAITING OUT IN THE COLD LIKE THIS FOR HIS MASTERS TO RETURN.
SNIFF

MINORU, ISN'T THIS BEAN JAM BUN GOOD?
HA
MM...

FOOF

YOU'RE RIGHT.
HEY...

OH...

I'VE SEEN IT SOME-WHERE BEFORE.
THAT DOG ...

WHAT?
WOOK, BWUZA. A DOGGIE.

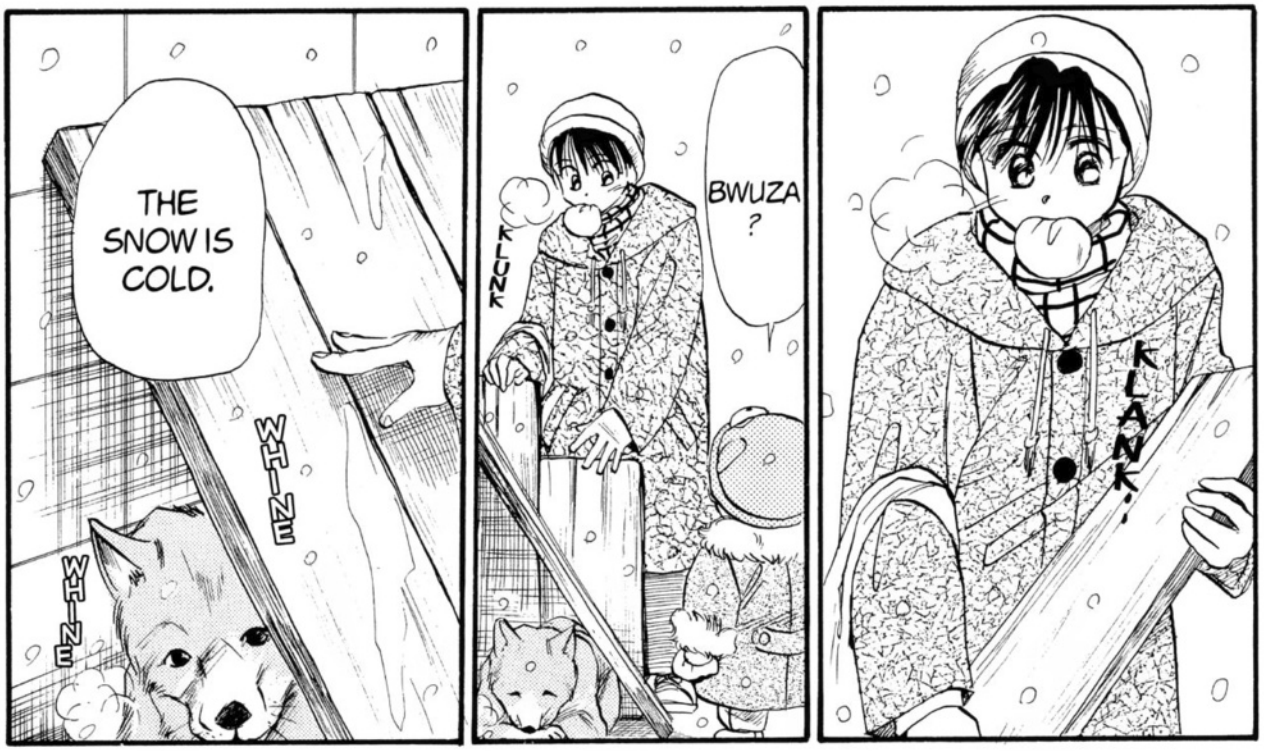
!!
OH!

I'M SURE I'VE SEEN IT SOME-WHERE BEFORE.
GOOD DOGGIE.
GOOD DOGGIE.
WAG
WAG
PAT
PAT

OH, YEAH ...
I USED TO SEE A LADY WALKING YOU ALL THE TIME.
BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

HEWE.

UBB ...
SNUFF



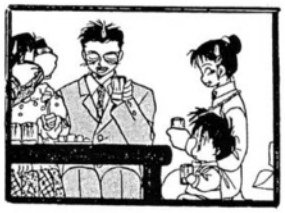
Scary-looking

Author's Note 3

About this scene of the Fujii family in Chapter 40...

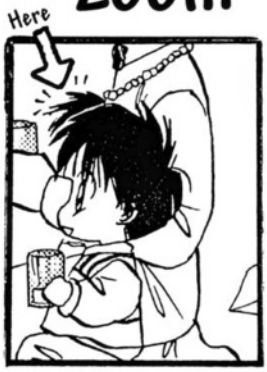
Ichika's not there!! Some readers pointed that out to me.

But look carefully.

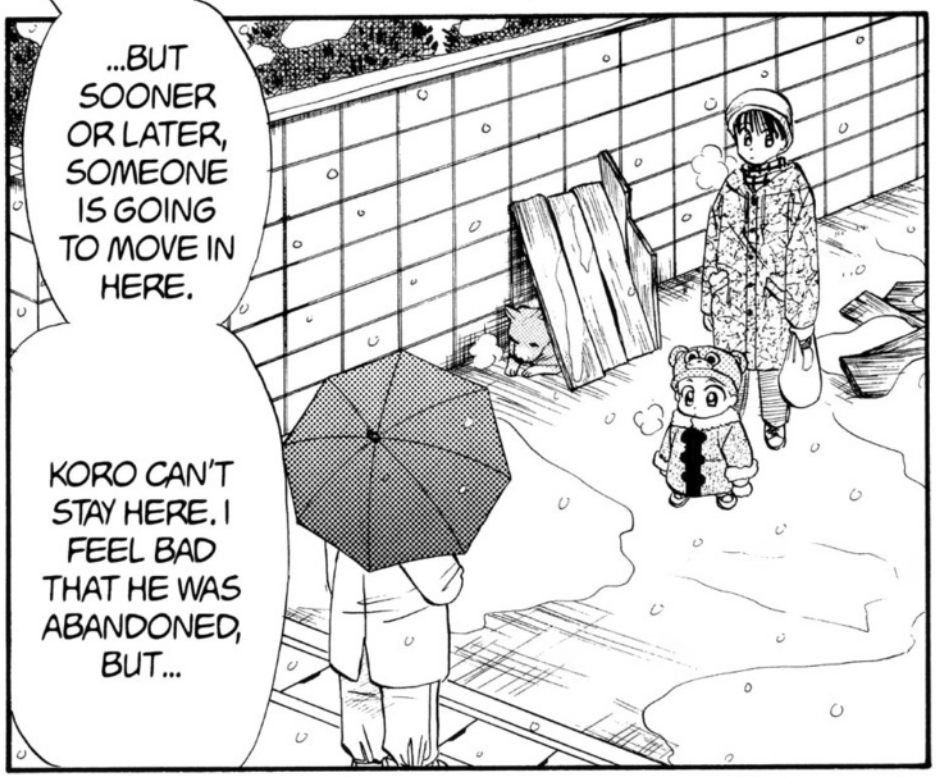


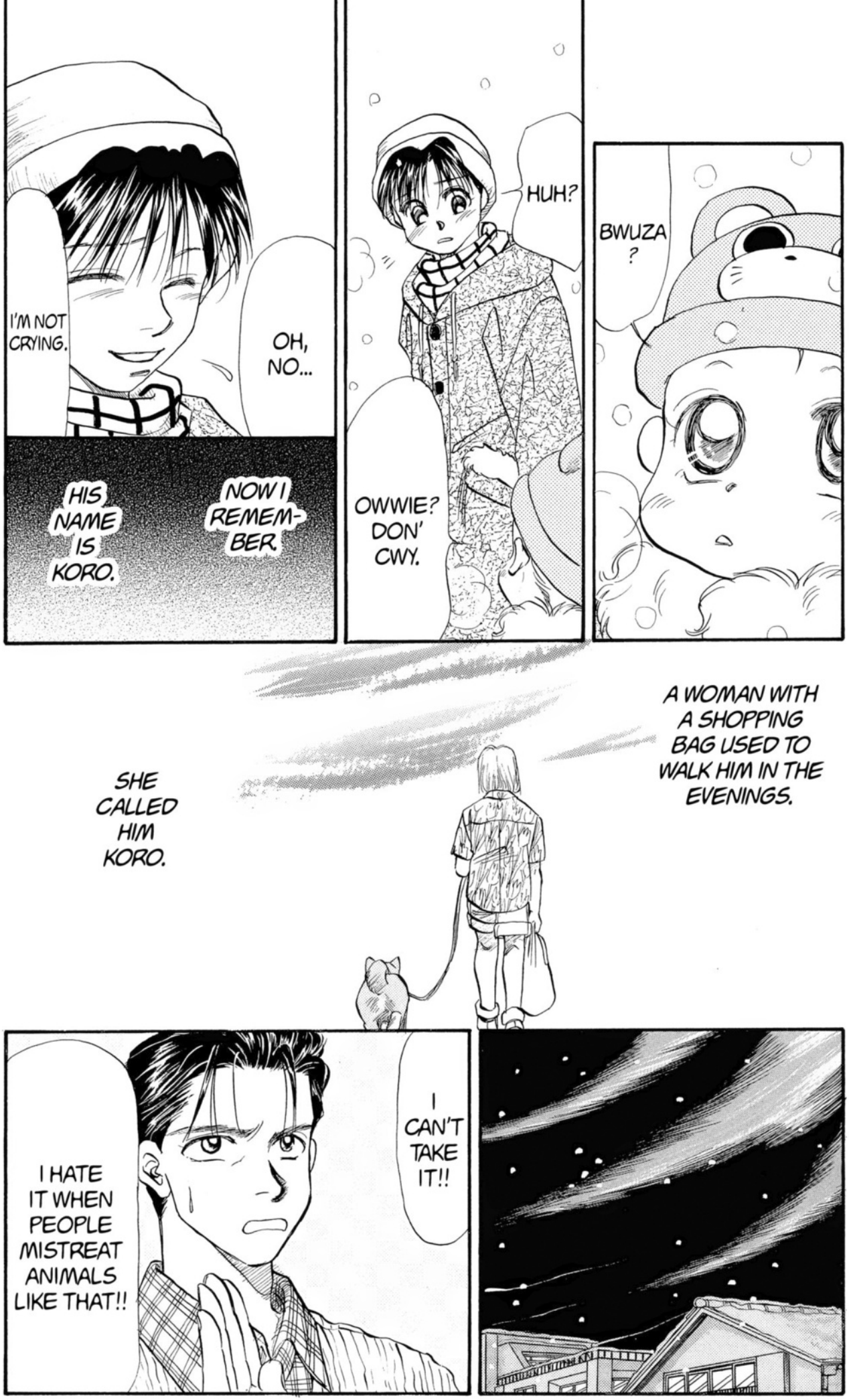
zoom

zoom



She is there!! You can see some of her hair over her brother's head.




I'M NOT CRYING.
OH, NO...
HIS NAME IS KORO.
NOW I REMEMBER.
HUH?
OWWIE? DON' CWY.
BWUZA ?
A WOMAN WITH A SHOPPING BAG USED TO WALK HIM IN THE EVENINGS.
SHE CALLED HIM KORO.
I HATE IT WHEN PEOPLE MISTREAT ANIMALS LIKE THAT!!
I CAN'T TAKE IT!!

YOU'RE GOING TO ASK IF YOU CAN KEEP HIM, RIGHT?
I DIDN'T ASK ANY-THING.
WELL, IT'S NOT THAT EASY.

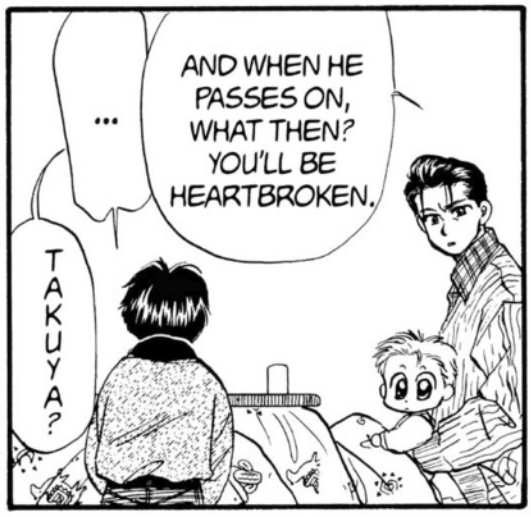
AT THIS RATE, HE'LL END UP IN THE ANIMAL SHELTER.
THE DOG'S OWNERS MOVED UP TO THE NORTHEAST.
NO.

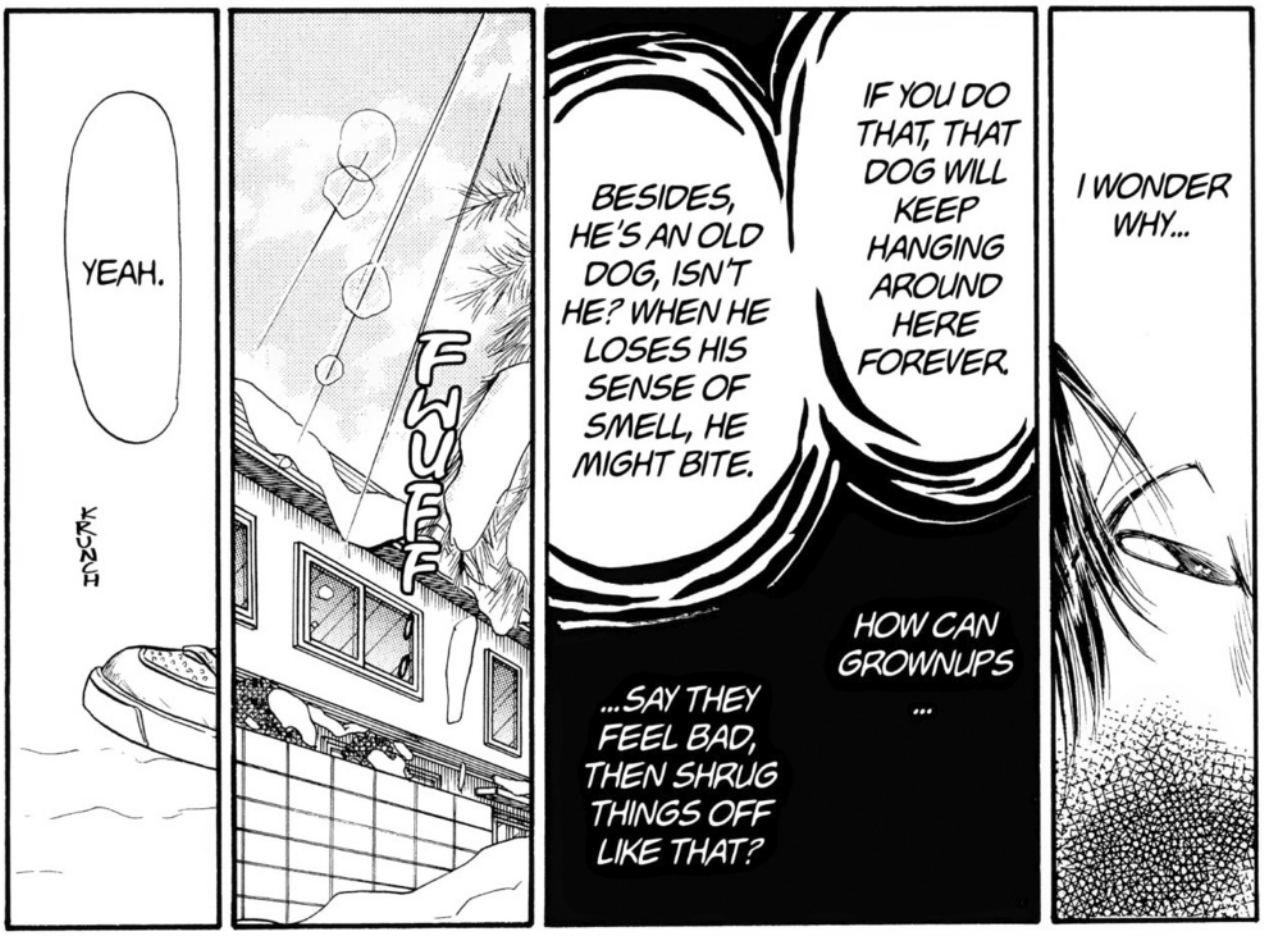
AND I ALREADY HAVE MY HANDS FULL WITH YOU TWO.
KIDS BEG FOR PETS, BUT THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS.

Minoru

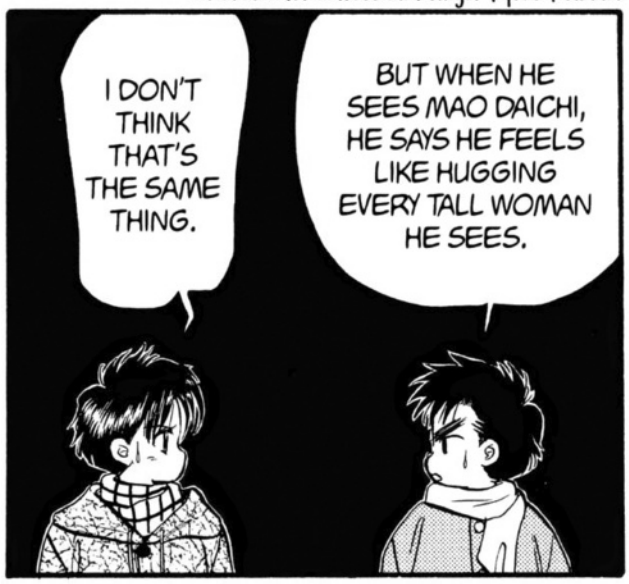
GROWNUPS ARE SO HEARTLESS.

BESIDES, HE'S AN OLD DOG. WHEN HE LOSES HIS SENSE OF SMELL, HE MIGHT BITE.


AND WHEN HE PASSES ON, WHAT THEN? YOU'LL BE HEARTBROKEN.
...
TAKUYA?



*Nickname for actress and singer Kyoko Koizumi



GET AWAY FROM HERE.
WHINE

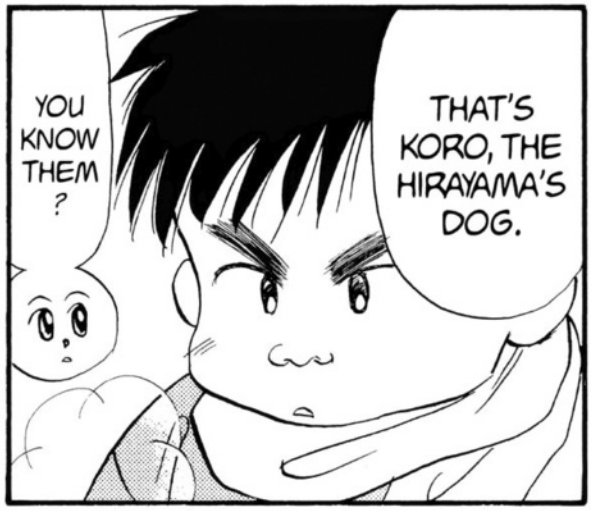
HEY!
GET AWAY!
WHAK
!!

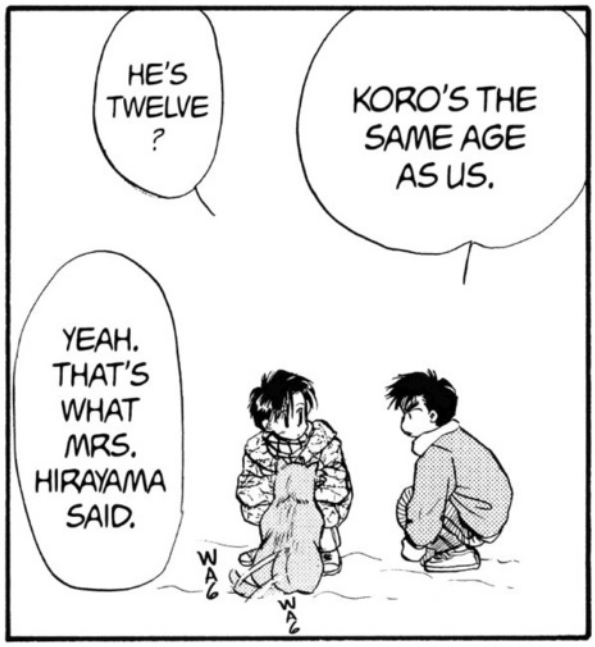
IS THIS THE DOG ...
...YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT?
YEAH.
HE MUST BE HUNGRY.
SNORT

KORO.
SNORT
WAG
WAG

OH, DEAR ...
LOOK AT THE MESS HE MADE.
WHINE
WHINE
WHINE
WHINE

THEY WERE REGULAR CUSTOMERS AT OUR STORE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THEY'D LEAVE HIM. THEY REALLY SEEMED TO LOVE HIM.
I HEARD MR. HIRAYAMA GOT A PERMANENT POSITION UP IN SENDAI.


THAT'S KORO, THE HIRAYAMA'S DOG.
YOU KNOW THEM ?


HE'S TWELVE ?
KORO'S THE SAME AGE AS US.
YEAH. THAT'S WHAT MRS. HIRAYAMA SAID.
WA
WA

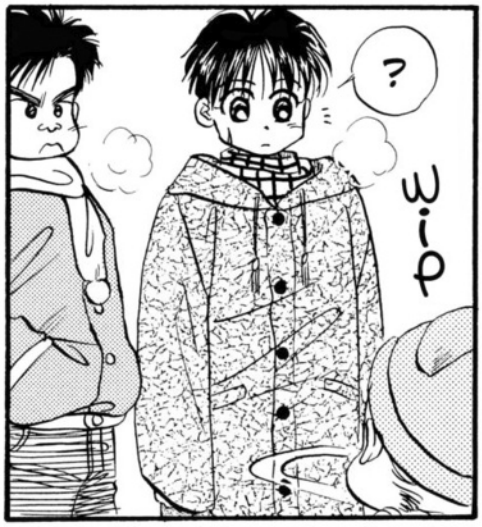
WELL, I GUESS IT WAS ONLY MRS. HIRAYAMA WHO DID.
REALLY? DID THEY TAKE GOOD CARE OF HIM?
HER HUSBAND AND KIDS DIDN'T DO ANYTHING FOR KORO.

HMM ...
I WONDER WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO KORO NOW...
BOW-WOW.
KUMANOI CITY SUNFLOWER NURSERY SCHOOL

BOW-WOW.
BOW-WOW.

HUH?
WIP

BOW-WOW.
BOW-WOW.
SNIFF
SNIFF


?
WIP

...

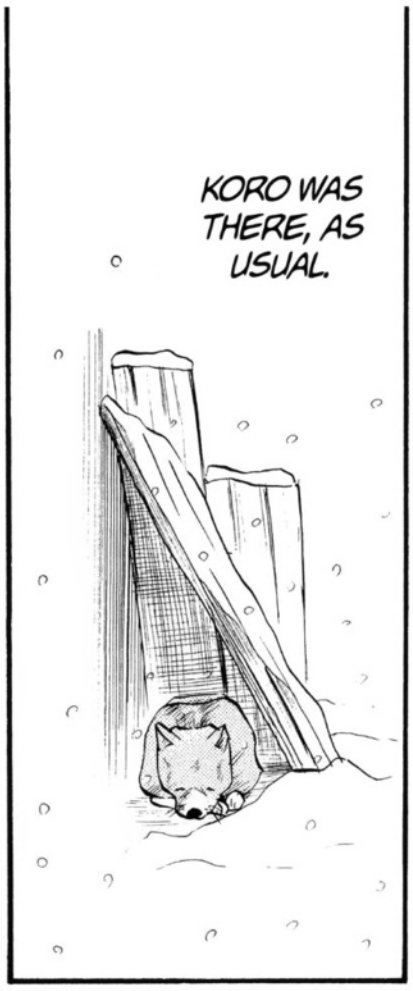
BOW... WOW ...?

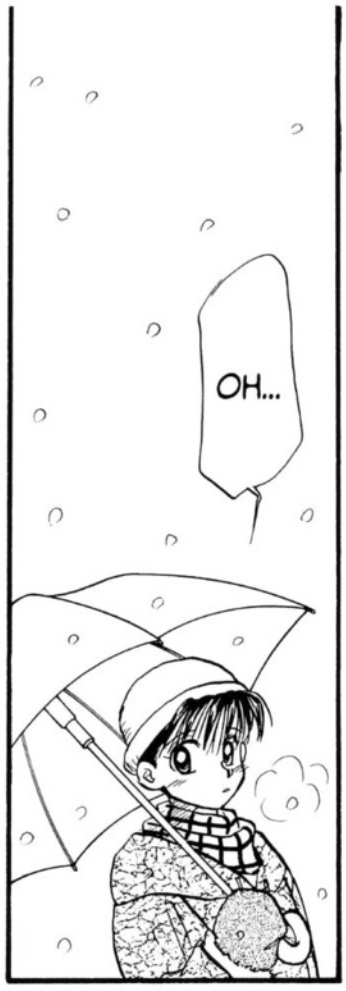
I WAN' A DOGGIE.
BWUZA ...

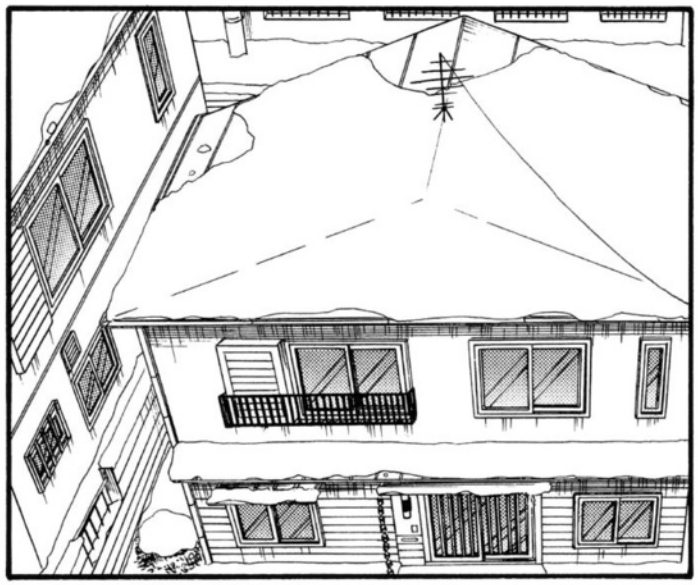
MINORU...

...DAD SAYS WE CAN'T KEEP HIM. GROWNUPS ARE SO HEARTLESS.
LOOK, SO DO I, BUT...
GLOOM
HEY! TAKUYA?

PEOPLE COMPLAINED ABOUT THE BOARDS I LEANED AGAINST THE WALL, BUT NO ONE REMOVED THEM.


KORO WAS THERE, AS USUAL.

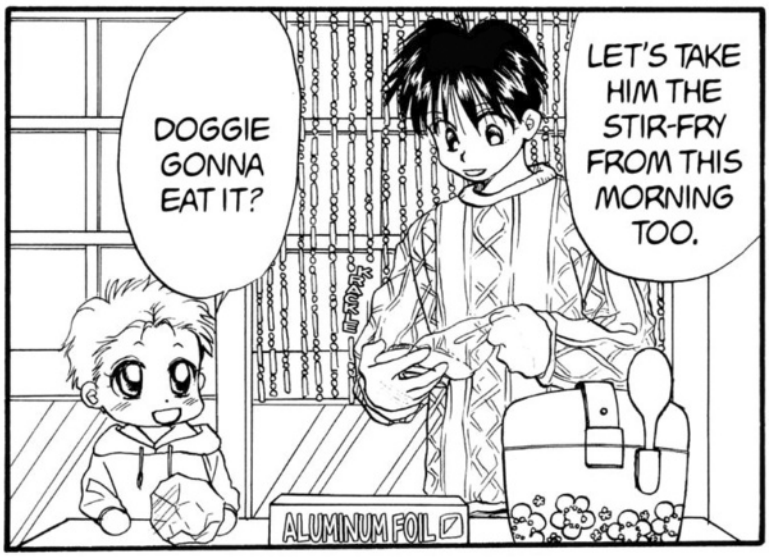

OH...



FWUMP

SIGH...

MINORU, SHH.
DAD'LL HEAR.
OH...

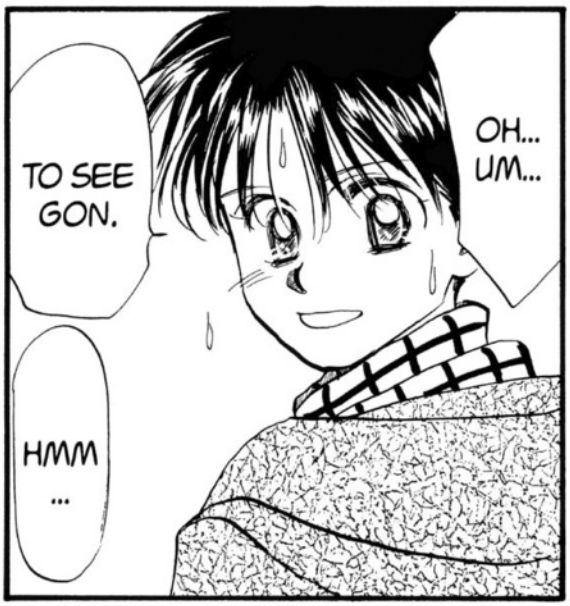

LET'S TAKE HIM THE STIR-FRY FROM THIS MORNING TOO.
DOGGIE GONNA EAT IT?
ALUMINUM FOIL

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TWITCH

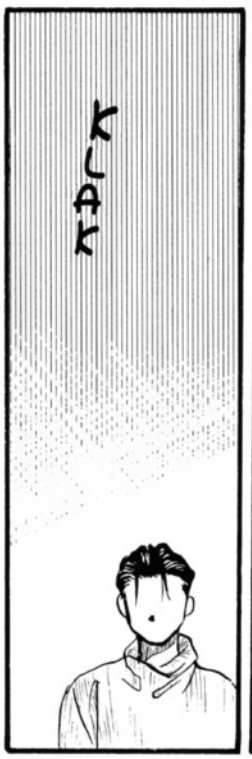
KLAK
FLOOSH

DON'T STAY OUT TOO LATE.
...
OKAY.

MANMARU SUPERMARKET


OH... UM...
TO SEE GON.
HMM ...

THANK GOOD-NESS.
HE DIDN'T CATCH ON, DID HE?
NO.


KLAK

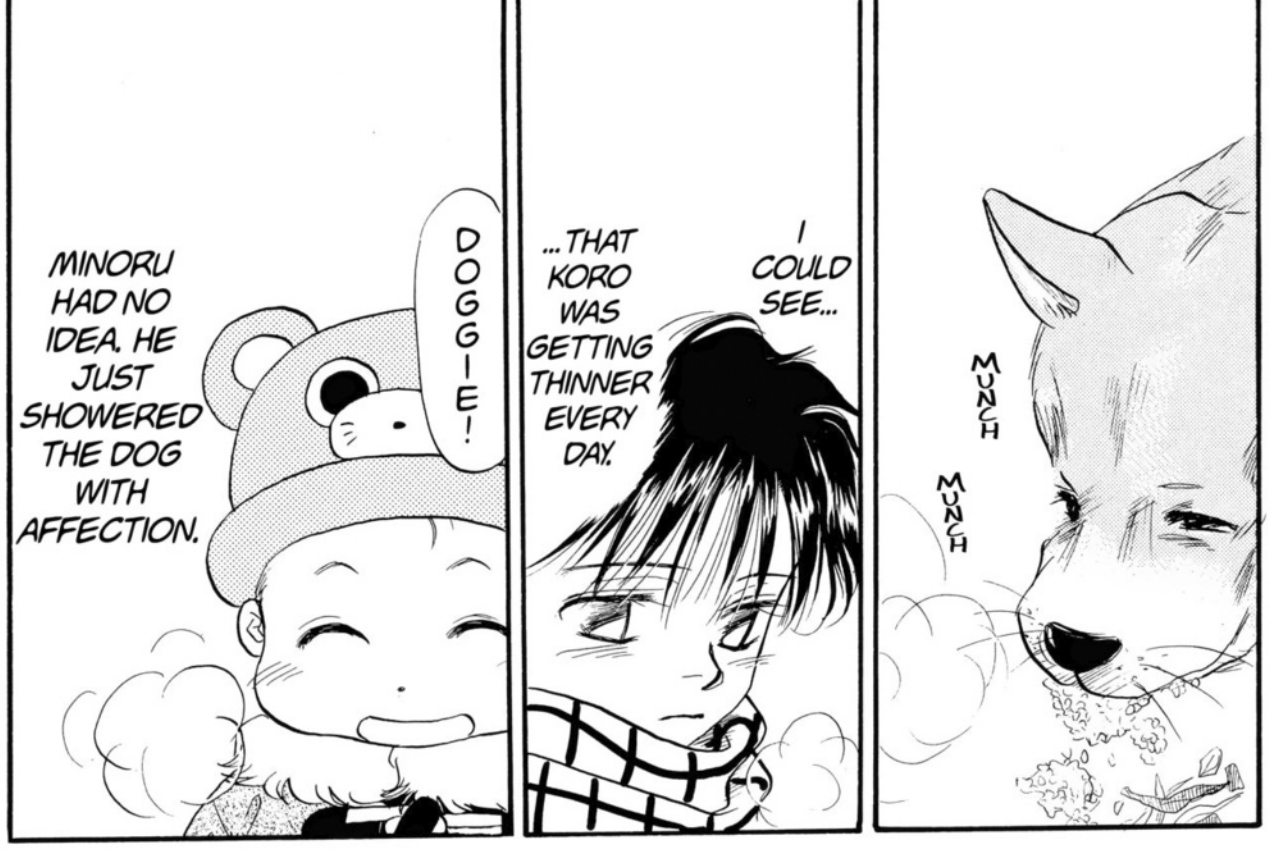
SWOOSH
WELL, SEE YOU LATER.
SEE YA LATO.

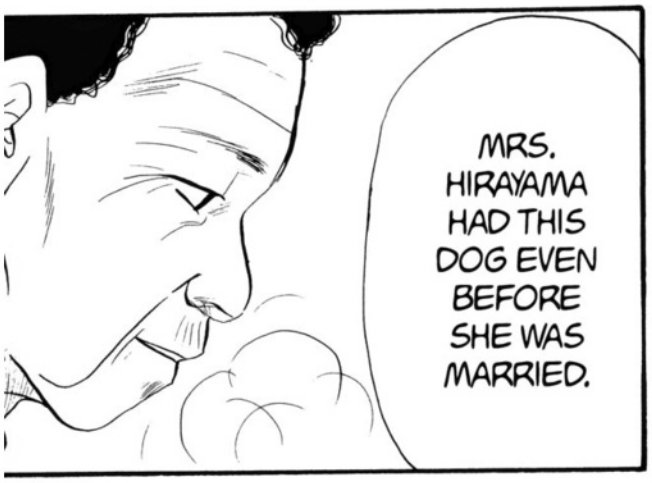
WHINE

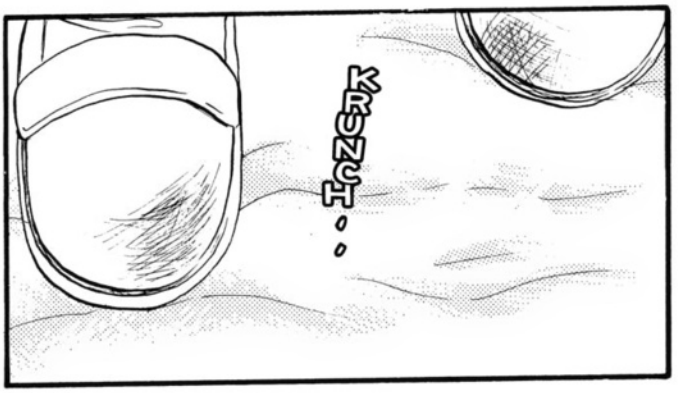
SHUFF
SHUFF

TUP TUP TUP TUP
KORO ...

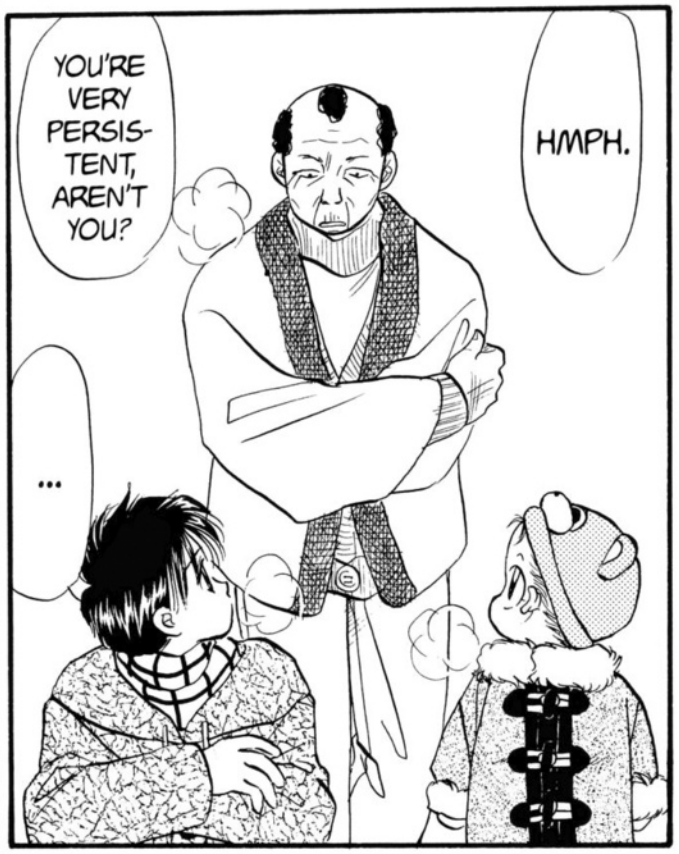
WE BROUGHT YOU SOME FOOD.
SNIFF
SNIFF
HERE, BOY.

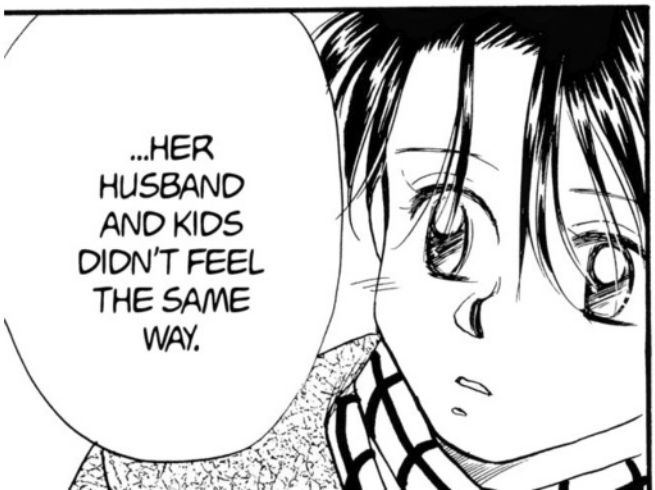

MINORU HAD NO IDEA. HE JUST SHOWERED THE DOG WITH AFFECTION.
DOGGIE!
...THAT KORO WAS GETTING THINNER EVERY DAY.
I COULD SEE...
MUNCH
MUNCH


MRS. HIRAYAMA HAD THIS DOG EVEN BEFORE SHE WAS MARRIED.


KRUNCH...

KORO WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF HER LIFE.
SNIF
SNIF
BUT...


YOU'RE VERY PERSIS-TENT, AREN'T YOU?
HMPH.
...


...HER HUSBAND AND KIDS DIDN'T FEEL THE SAME WAY.

THE DAY THE HIRAYAMAS LEFT...
...KORO CAME BACK HERE.

AND SO THE KIDS TOOK HIM AND LEFT HIM SOMEWHERE.
SNORT

KORO WAS TOO OLD. SHE COULDN'T TAKE HIM ALONG.
WHEN IT WAS TIME FOR THEM TO MOVE, HER HUSBAND MADE IT CLEAR.
WHIMPER

MINORU ...
YOU WANT SOMETHING FROM THE CONVEN-IENCE STORE?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

BWUZA...
I WAN' A DOGGIE.

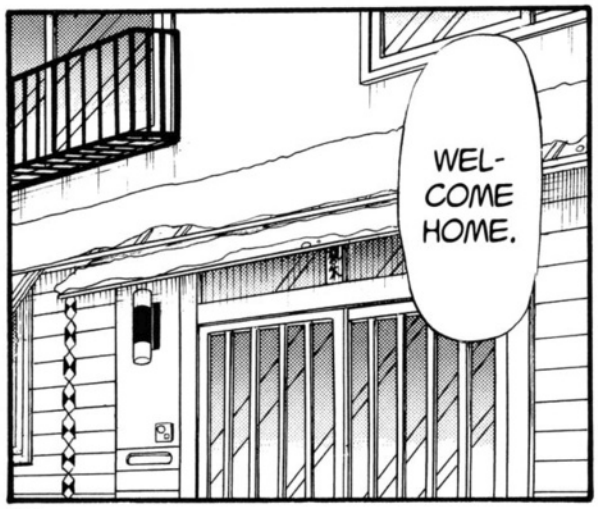
...

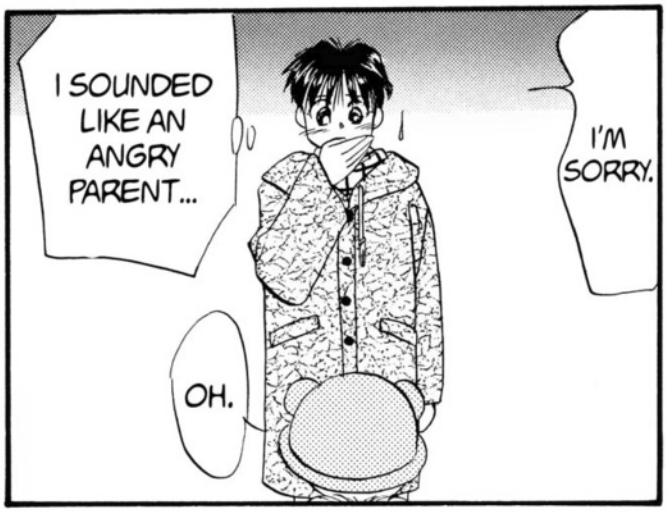
A DOGGIE.

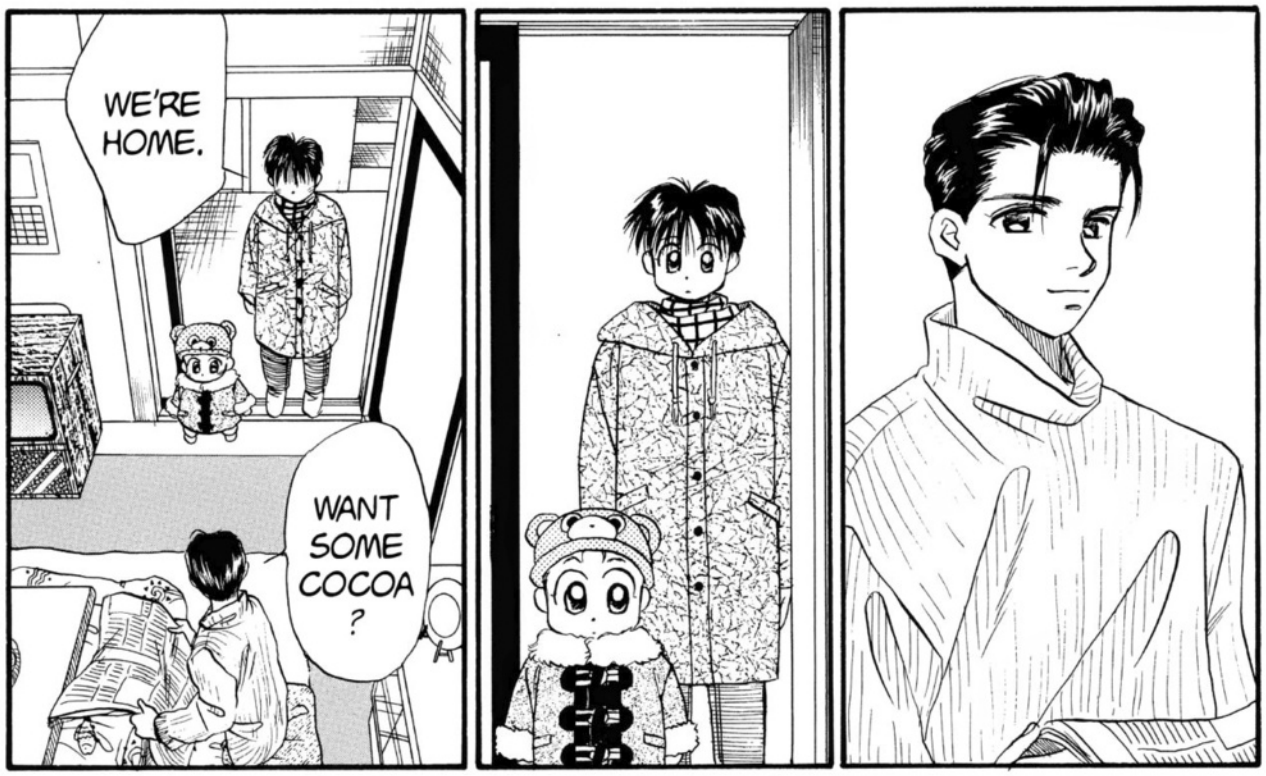
TWITCH
I TOLD YOU, DAD SAID NO! WHY CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND THAT?!

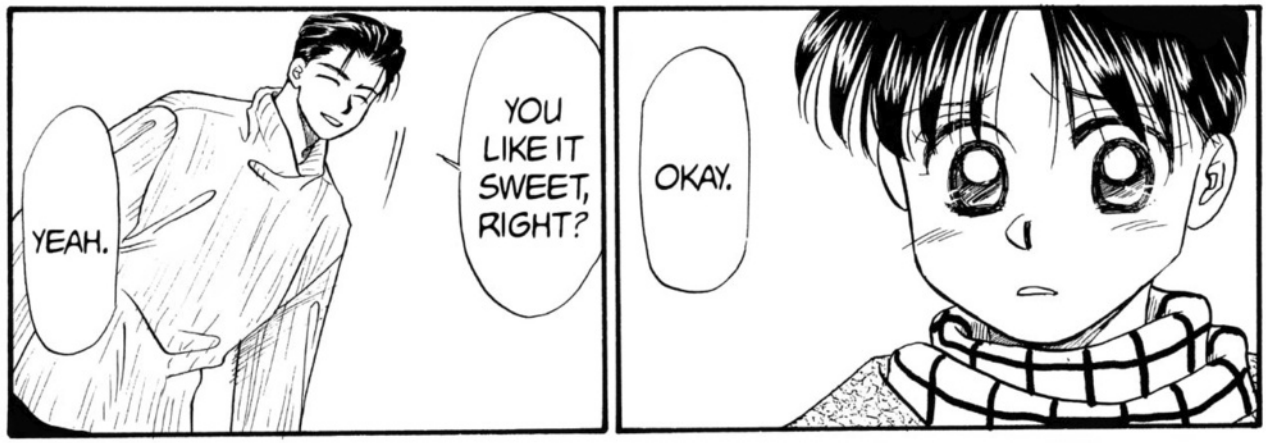
UBB...
UBB...

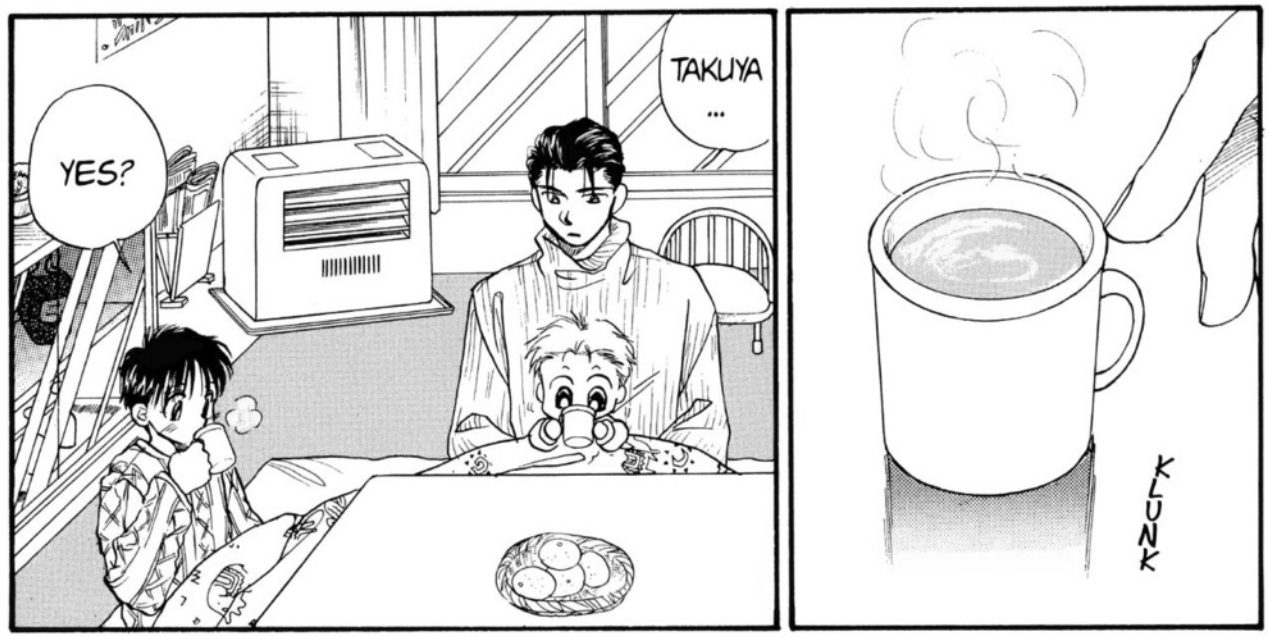
HUFF

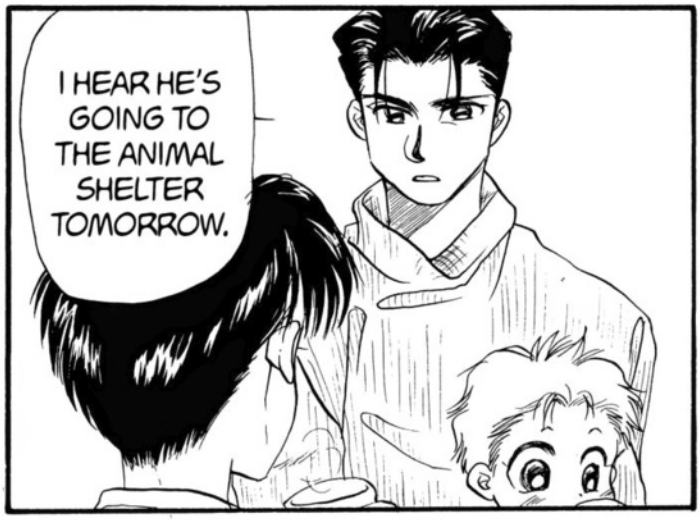

WEL-COME HOME.


I'M SORRY.
I SOUNDED LIKE AN ANGRY PARENT...
OH.


WE'RE HOME.
WANT SOME COCOA ?


YOU LIKE IT SWEET, RIGHT?
YEAH.
OKAY.


TAKUYA ...
YES?
KLUNK


I HEAR HE'S GOING TO THE ANIMAL SHELTER TOMORROW.

THAT DOG KORO...
BA-BUMP

...
WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO HIM THEN?

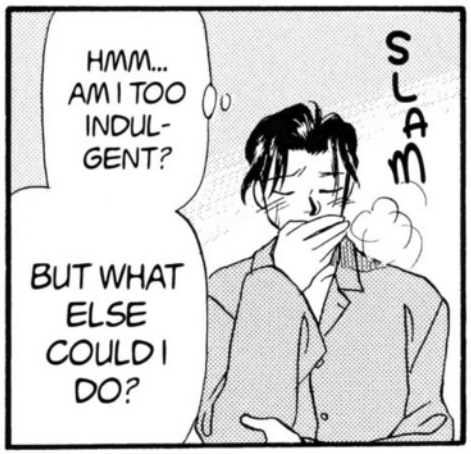
SOME WOMAN CALLED THE ANIMAL SHELTER.
THERE HAVE BEEN A LOT OF COM-PLAINTS.

THEY CAUGHT HIM GOING THROUGH THE TRASH.
H-HOW COME?

...

...WORRYING ABOUT IT WON'T HELP ANYONE.
TAKUYA ...

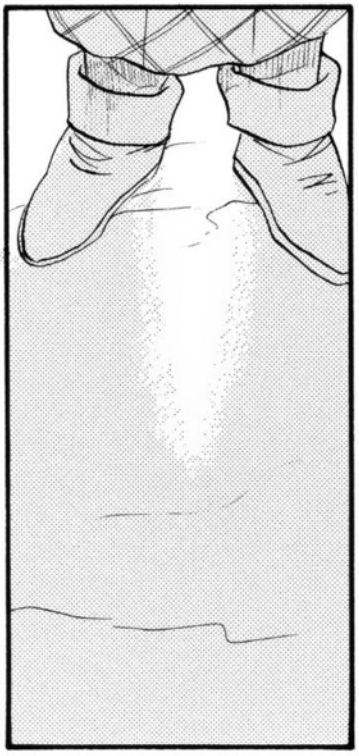
I COULDN'T SLEEP THAT NIGHT.
TUK
TAKUYA...
TWITCH
OKAY, GO GET HIM.
SIGH...
DAD...
...

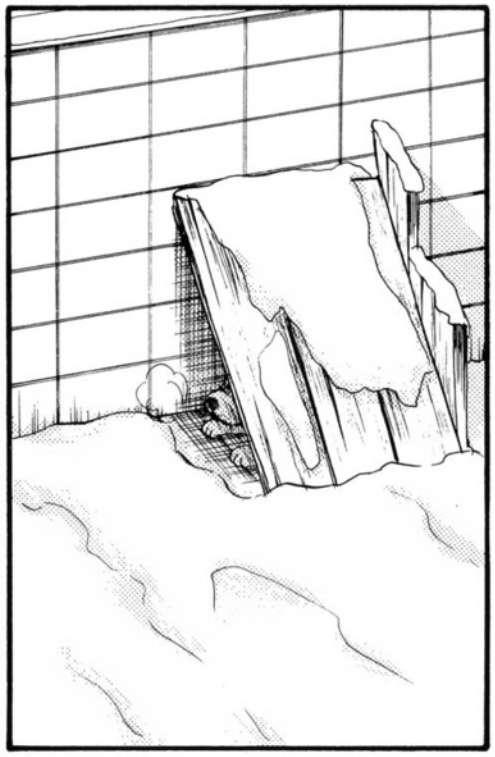

SLAM
HMM... AM I TOO INDUL-GENT?
BUT WHAT ELSE COULD I DO?

SNIFF
SNIFF
KRUNCH
KRUNCH

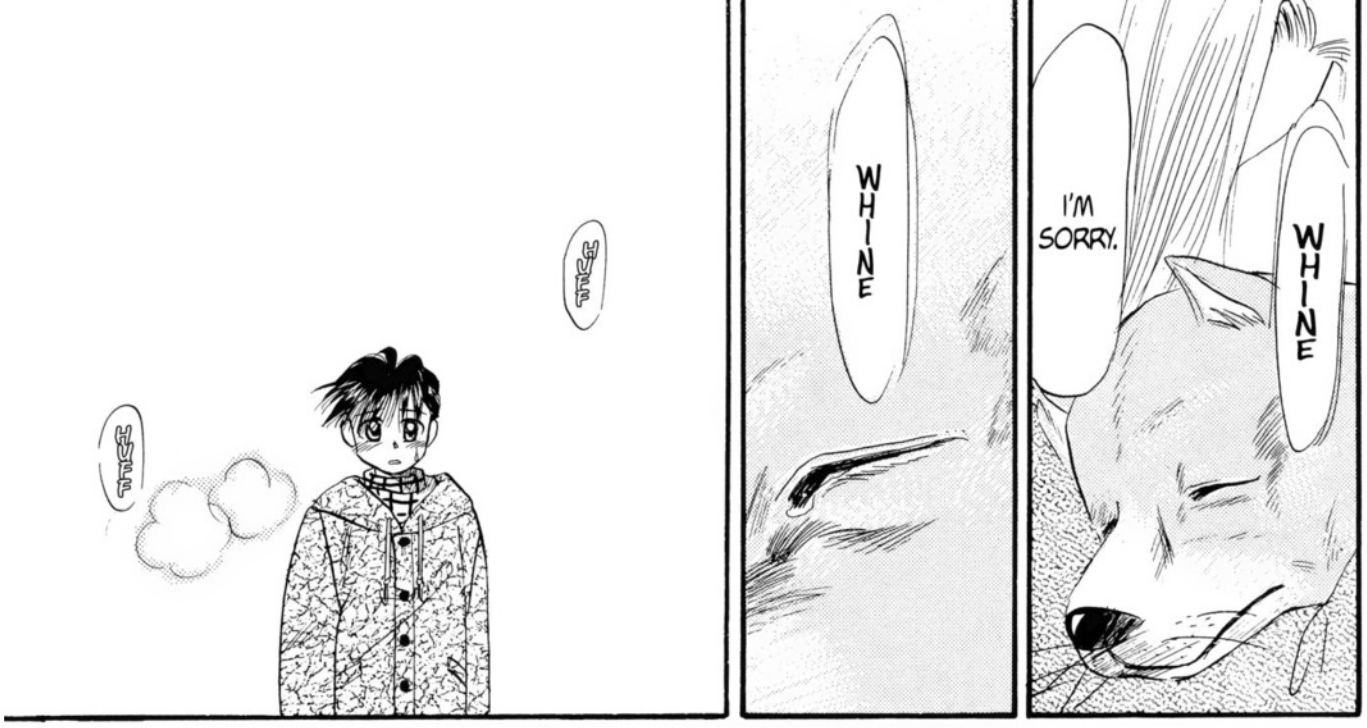
...
OKAY!

KRUNCH
WHINE





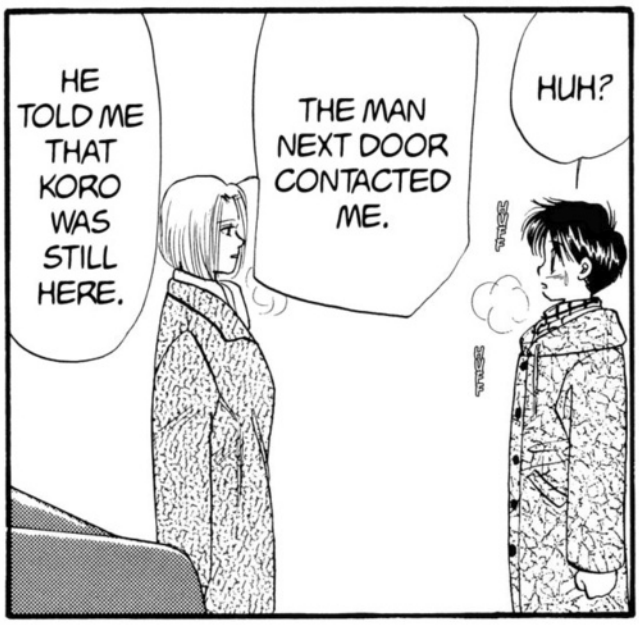
KRUNCH!
SIGH...
SNIFF
SNIFF
KORO ...
SNIFF
WHINE
SNIFF
KORO ...
...I'M SORRY.
I'VE COME TO GET YOU. LET'S GO.

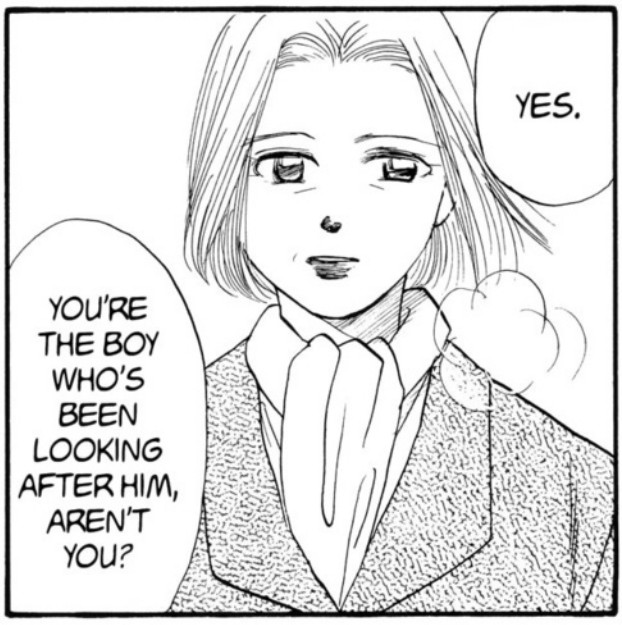

HUFF
HUFF
WHINE
I'M SORRY.
WHINE

MRS. HI-RAYA-MA?
WHO ...?
HUFF
ARE YOU TAKING KORO AWAY?

HUFF

HUFF
HUFF


HE TOLD ME THAT KORO WAS STILL HERE.
THE MAN NEXT DOOR CONTACTED ME.
HUH?
HUFF
HUFF


YES.
YOU'RE THE BOY WHO'S BEEN LOOKING AFTER HIM, AREN'T YOU?

KORO IS AN OLD DOG.
SO OLD THAT HIS HEARTLESS OWNERS ABAN-DONED HIM.
HE WON'T EVEN BE ABLE TO GO FOR WALKS PRETTY SOON.
FEEDING HIM AND TAKING CARE OF HIM WON'T BE EASY.

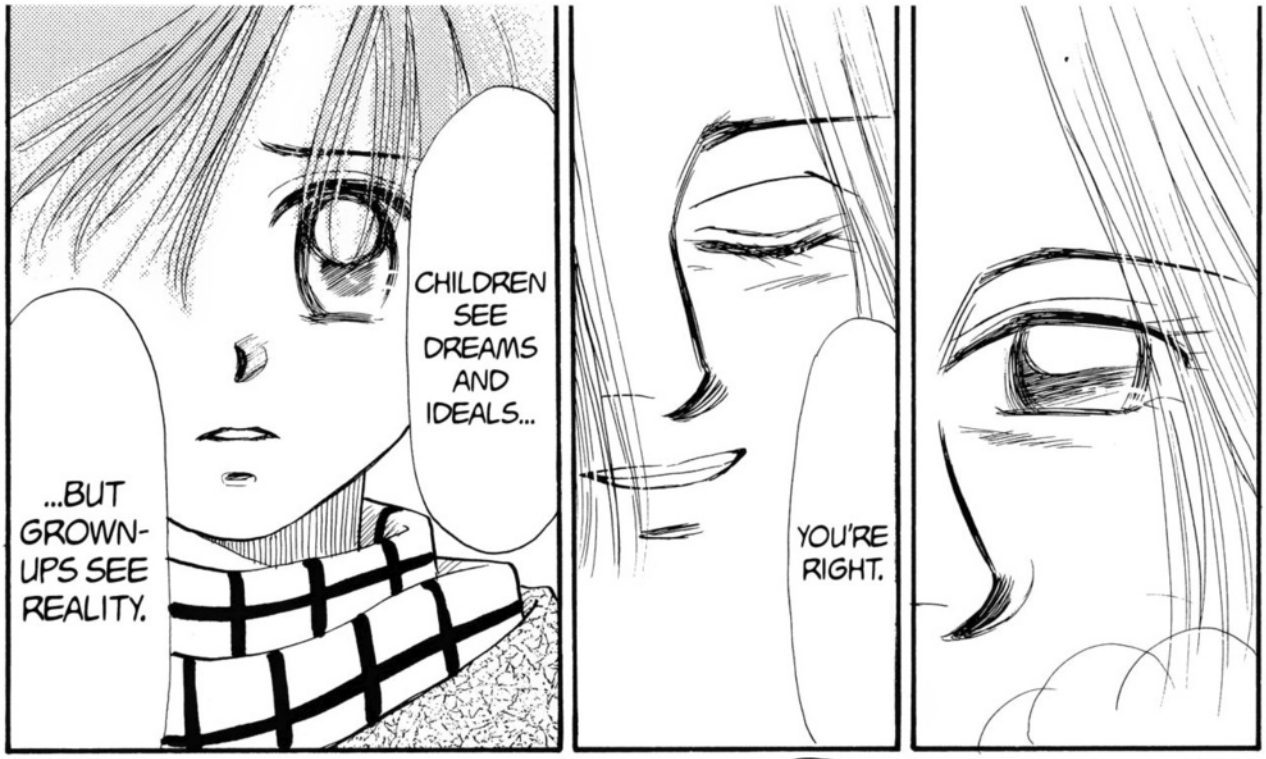
THANK YOU...
...BUT HE'S MORE THAN YOU COULD HANDLE.

I...
I COULD KEEP KORO.
HUFF...

THAT'S WHY, WHEN MY HUSBAND AND CHILDREN SAID THEY WOULD DUMP HIM SOME-WHERE...
...I DIDN'T TRY TO STOP THEM.
I FORGOT MY RESPONSI-BILITIES.
I REGRET THAT NOW.

WHY? HOW COME ...
...GROWN-UPS ARE LIKE THIS?!
THEY SAY ONE THING AND DO ANOTHER.

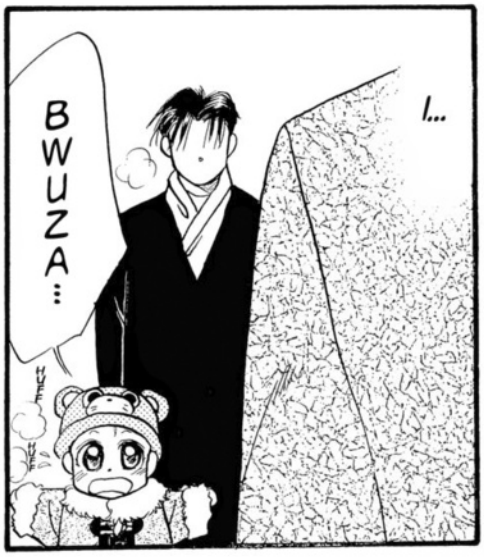
YOU FEEL SORRY FOR HIM, BUT AFTER A WHILE, YOU'LL GET TIRED OF TAKING CARE OF HIM.
I WAS AFRAID TO WATCH KORO DIE.



BUT DON'T BE TOO HARD ON THEM.

SEEING REALITY...

...CAN BE PAINFUL.


BWUZA…
I…

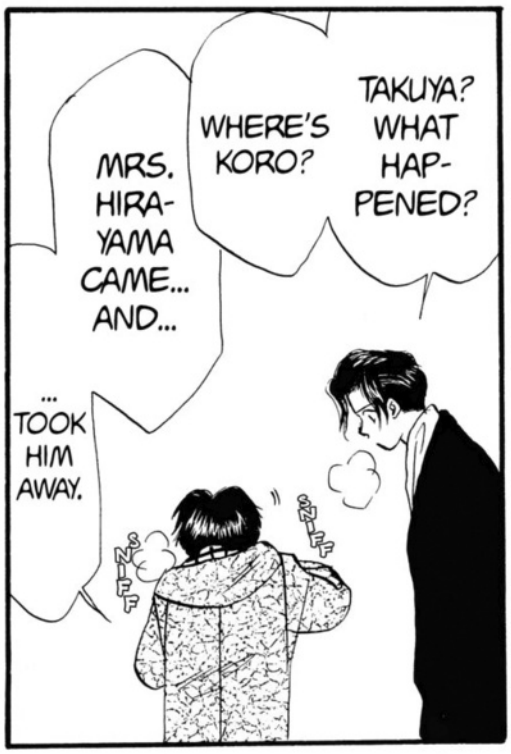
…

I…

BUT IT'S SOME-THING WE PROBABLY SHOULDN'T TURN AWAY FROM.

DOGGIE.
MINORU…

HUFF
HUFF
HUFF

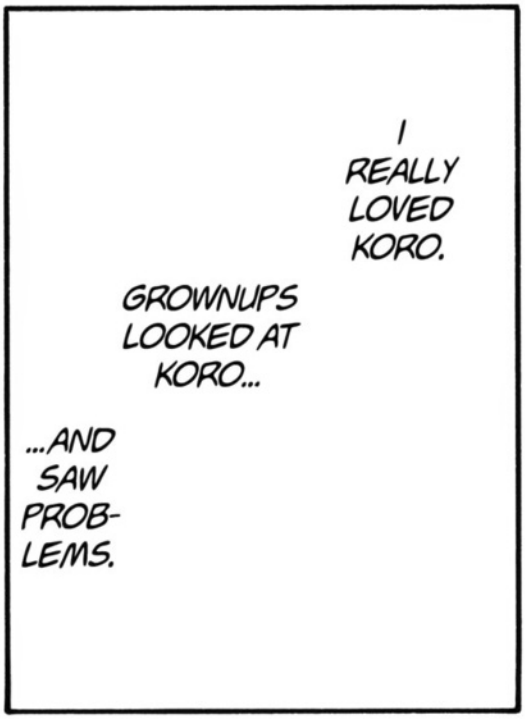

MRS. HIRA-YAMA CAME... AND...
WHERE'S KORO?
TAKUYA? WHAT HAP-PENED?
...TOOK HIM AWAY.
SNIFF
SNIFF

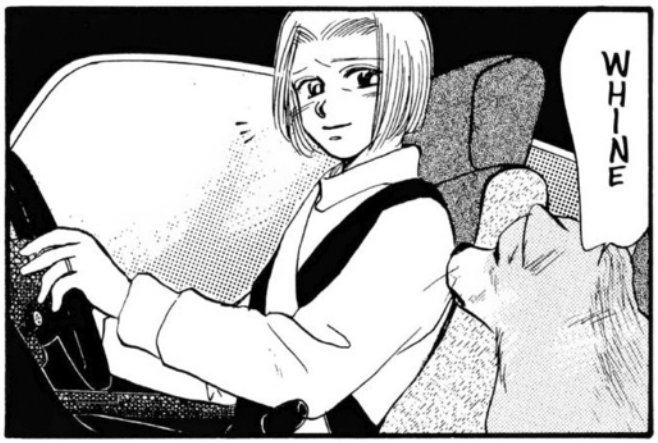
MINO-RU...

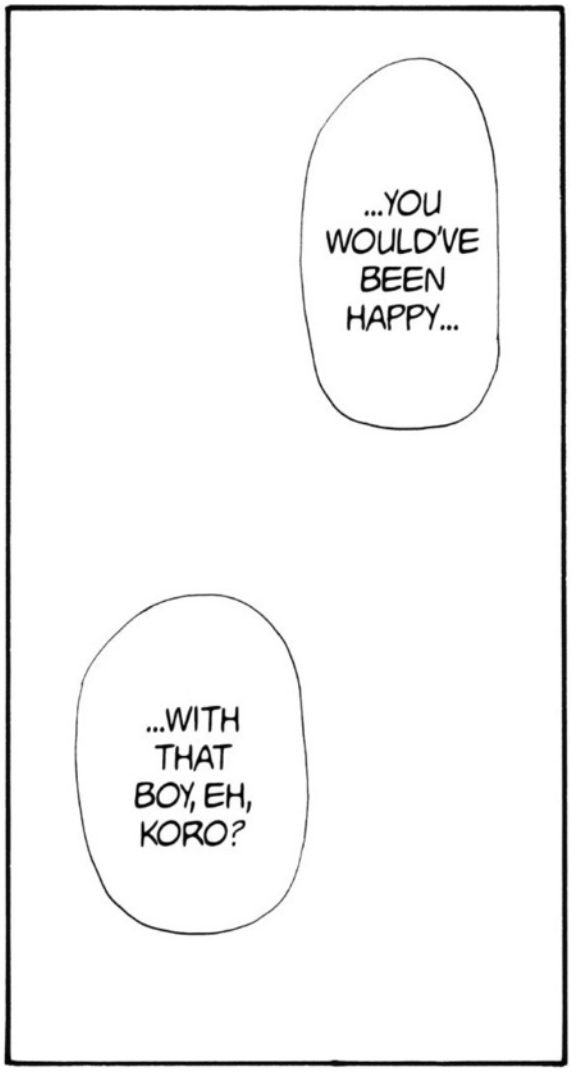
DOGGIE ...
SOB
...GO 'WAY.

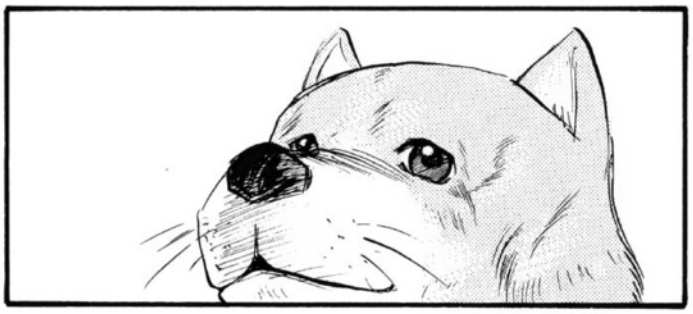
I...
UNH... BUT...
SNIFF
DON'T CRY.
THAT WAS A GOOD THING.
OH.

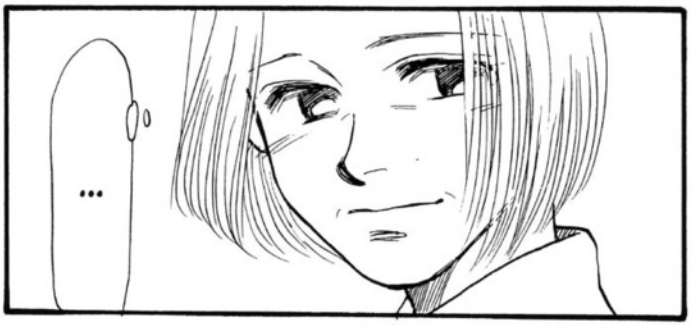
I...
...JUST SAW SOME-THING I WANTED.


I REALLY LOVED KORO.
GROWNUPS LOOKED AT KORO...
...AND SAW PROB-LEMS.









Chapter 41 / The End

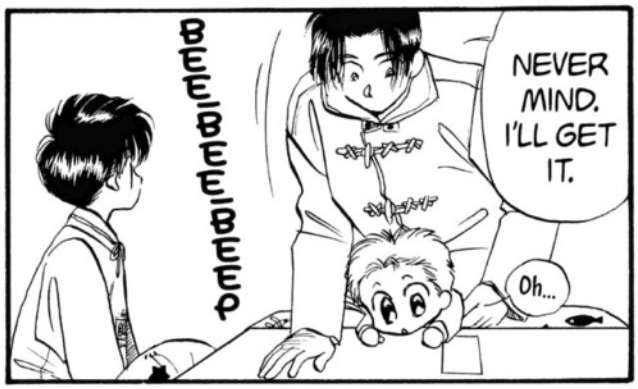
BABY & Me
Chapter 42

NEW YEAR'S CARDS KEEP COMING EVEN AFTER THE FIRST.
SHHK...
MAILMEN HAVE A HARD JOB.
DAD...
WE GOT ANOTHER NEW YEAR'S CARD.
KLAK...
IT'S FROM EDOMAE.
I CAN JUST SEE HIM SCRAMBLING TO WRITE IT.
I WAN' ONE!
HUH?
THERE ISN'T ONE FOR YOU, MINORU.
FLIP

P.S.?
HUH?

P.S. A bunch of us may drop by on January 3rd. Please don't be mean to us. ♡

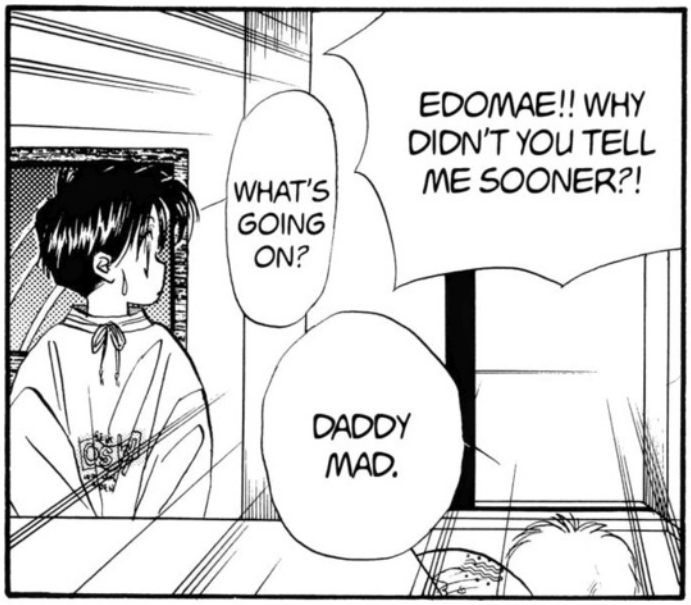
HAPPY NEW YEAR!!
WHAT'S THIS? A HAND-WRITTEN CARD?
This is supposed to be a crane.
Akio Edomae
PS.


BEEEEEEEEEP
NEVER MIND. I'LL GET IT.
Oh...

HELLO ...
...ENOKI RESI-DENCE.

THE THIRD? BUT THAT'S TODAY!
WHY DIDN'T HE SEND THE CARD SOONER?!
OH...
...THE PHONE.
BEEEEEEEEEP
BEEEEEEEEEP

HEY CHIEF, HOW'S IT GOIN'?! HAPPY NEW YEAR! IT'S ME, EDOMAE!! MS. OMORI, YAMAGUCHI, AND ENDO ARE WITH ME!!
Hi, Chief!
WA HA HA HA HA

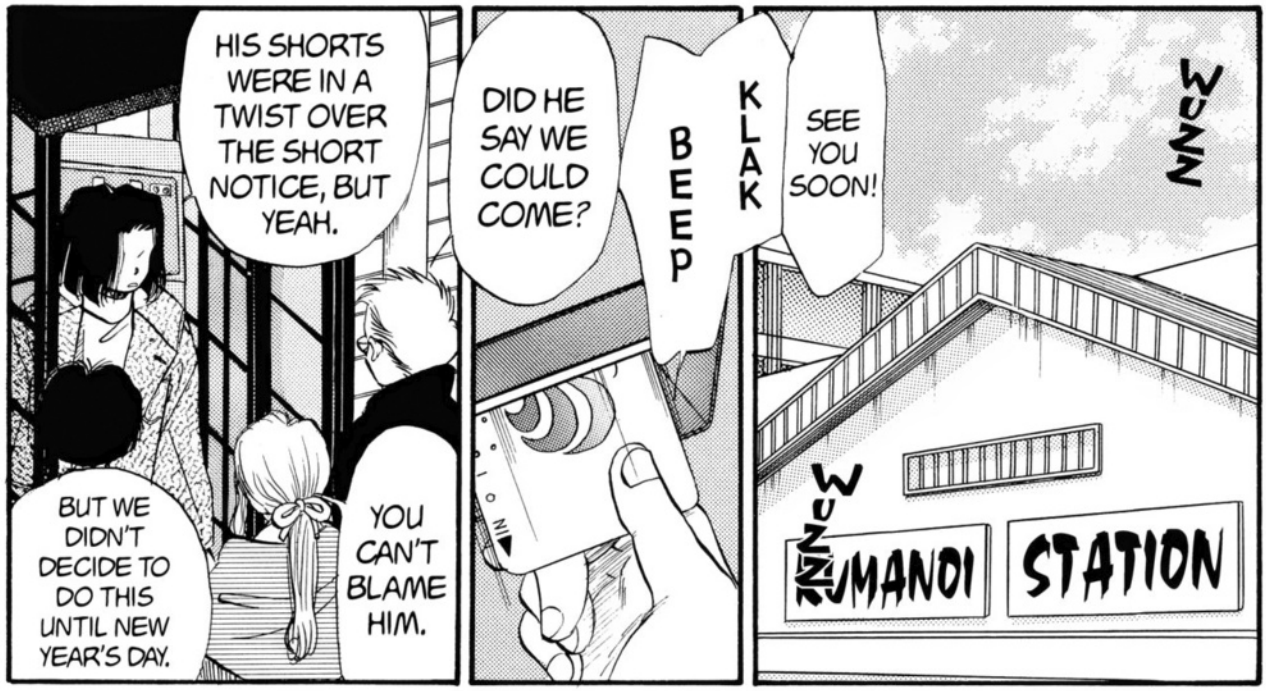

EDOMAE!! WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME SOONER?!
WHAT'S GOING ON?
DADDY MAD.

E-EDOMAE!? WHERE ARE YOU?!
WE'RE AT THE STATION! KUMANOI STATION!
THE STATION ?!
DOOM

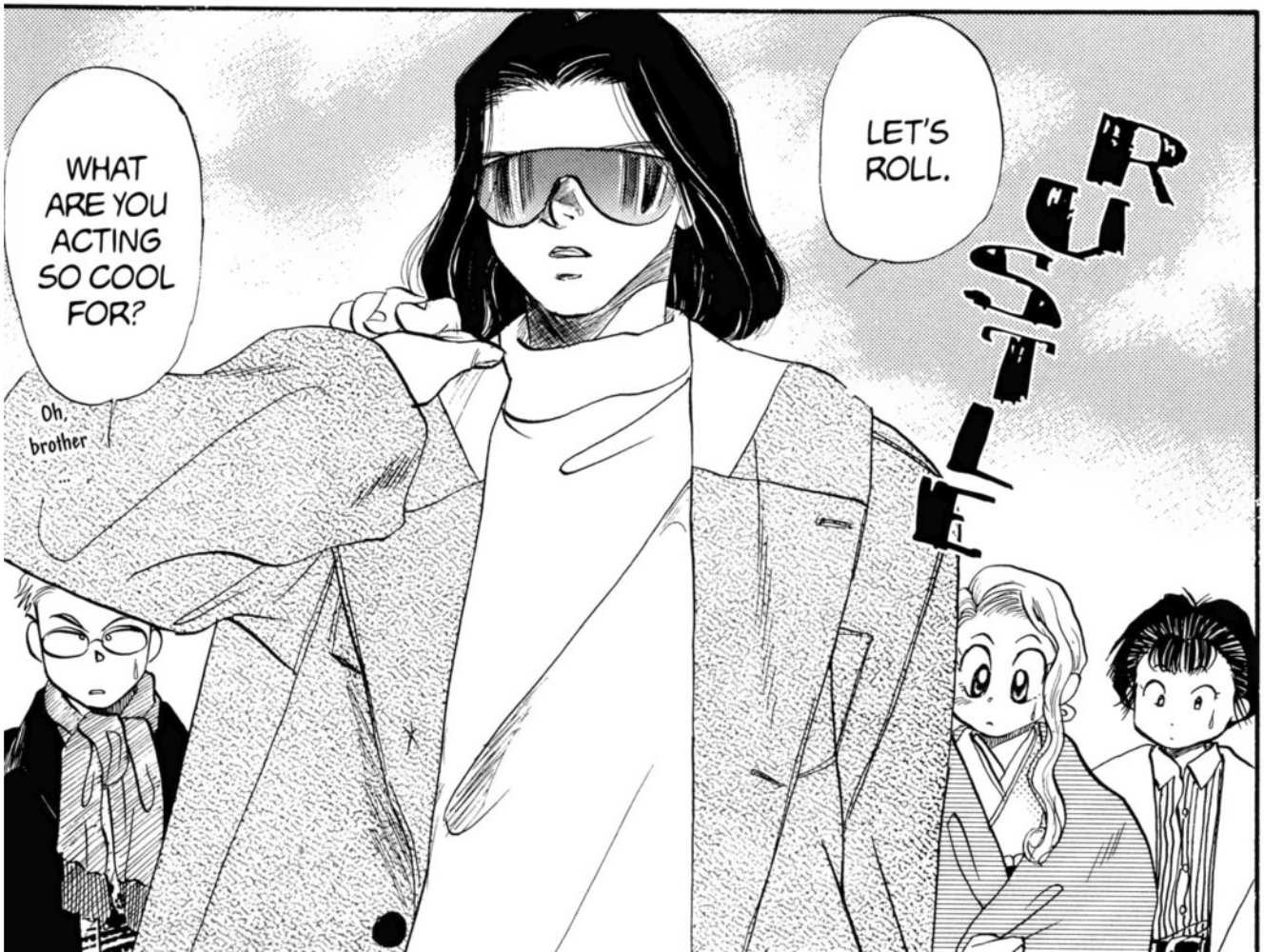
DON'T WORRY!! WE HAVE YOUR ADDRESS. WE'LL ASK THE WAY AT THE POLICE BOX. DON'T WORRY ABOUT NOTHIN'!
I'M NOT WORRIED.

YOU...!
THAT MAKES SENSE. I MAILED IT ON NEW YEAR'S DAY.

I JUST GOT IT TODAY!
WHADDAYA MEAN? IT WAS ALL IN THE CARD.
YACK
YACK


HIS SHORTS WERE IN A TWIST OVER THE SHORT NOTICE, BUT YEAH.
BUT WE DIDN'T DECIDE TO DO THIS UNTIL NEW YEAR'S DAY.
YOU CAN'T BLAME HIM.
DID HE SAY WE COULD COME?
BEEP
KLAK
SEE YOU SOON!
WUZZ
WUZZ
RUMANOI
STATION

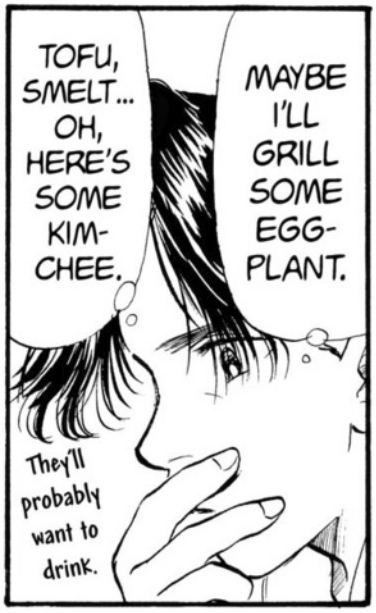
NOW...
SWIPP...


WHAT ARE YOU ACTING SO COOL FOR?
Oh, brother...
LET'S ROLL.
RUSTLE

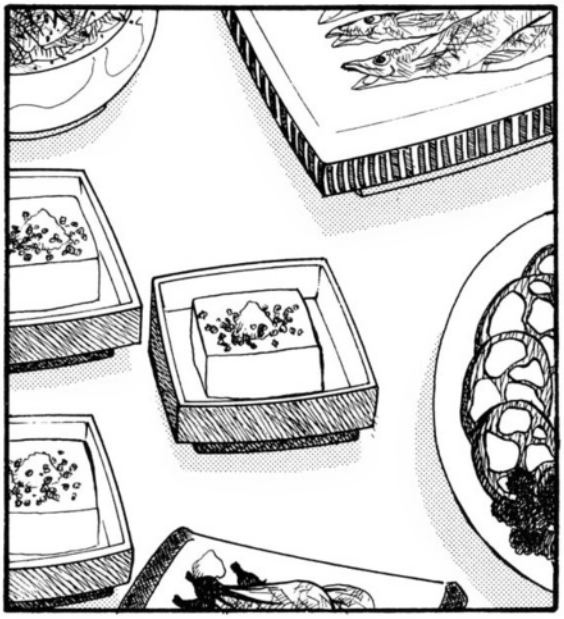
DAD, WE HAVE SOME HAM.
OH WELL, I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO COOK SOME-THING...
HOW ABOUT SOME SOUP?
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE

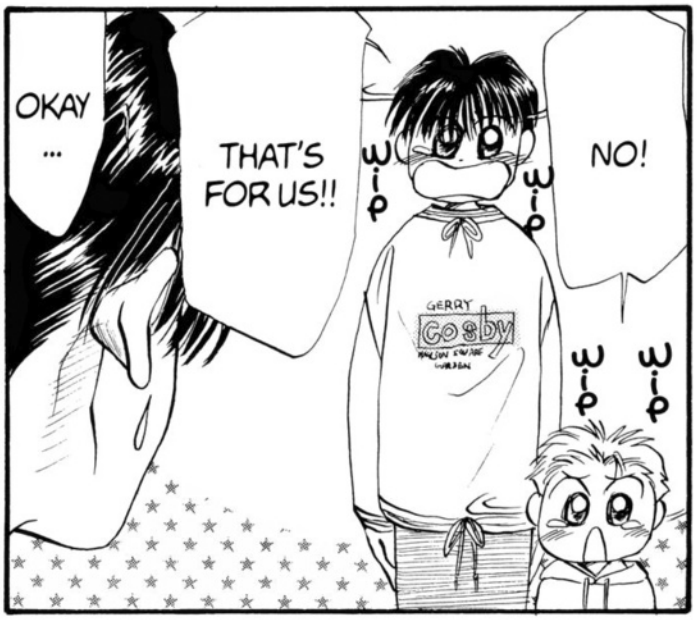
DARN IT!!

I'LL MAKE SUSHI.
I FOUND A SUSHI MIX.


TOFU, SMELT... OH, HERE'S SOME KIM-CHEE.
MAYBE I'LL GRILL SOME EGG-PLANT.
They'll probably want to drink.

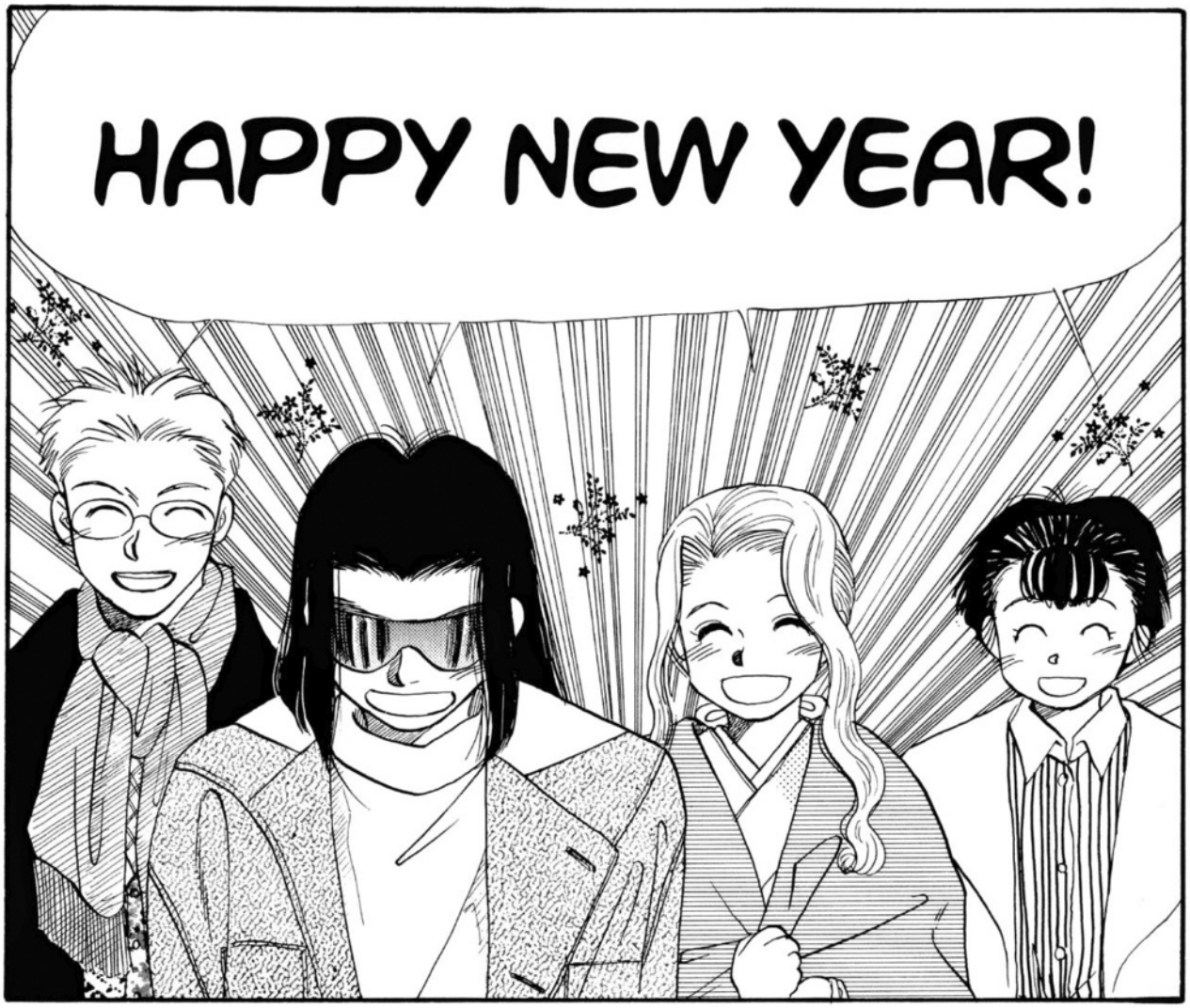
NO!! I'M SAVING THAT TO HAVE WITH MY SAKE.
C-COULDN'T WE USE HALF OF IT?
WIP
WIP



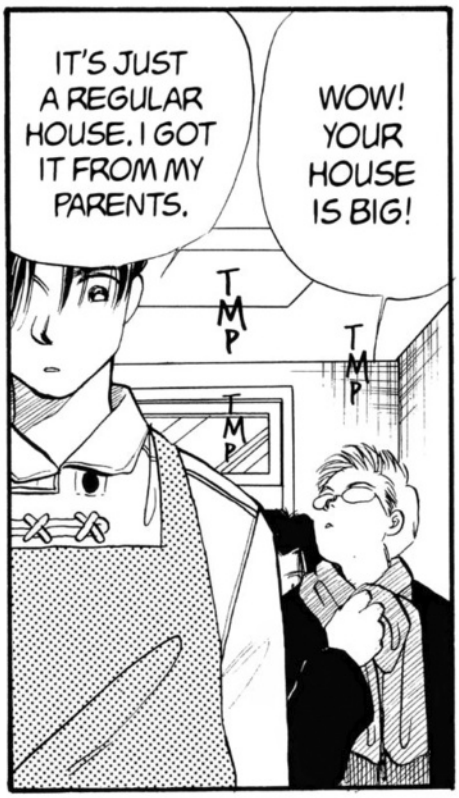

OKAY ...
THAT'S FOR US!!
NO!
WIP
WIP
WIP
WIP
GERRY
Cosby

DING/DONG
OH!
IS THAT...?

KLAKA.
WE'LL FEED THEM OUR NEW YEAR'S LEFTOVERS. THERE'S PLENTY.
WOW. THAT'S A LOT OF FOOD.
Wow ...


HAPPY NEW YEAR!

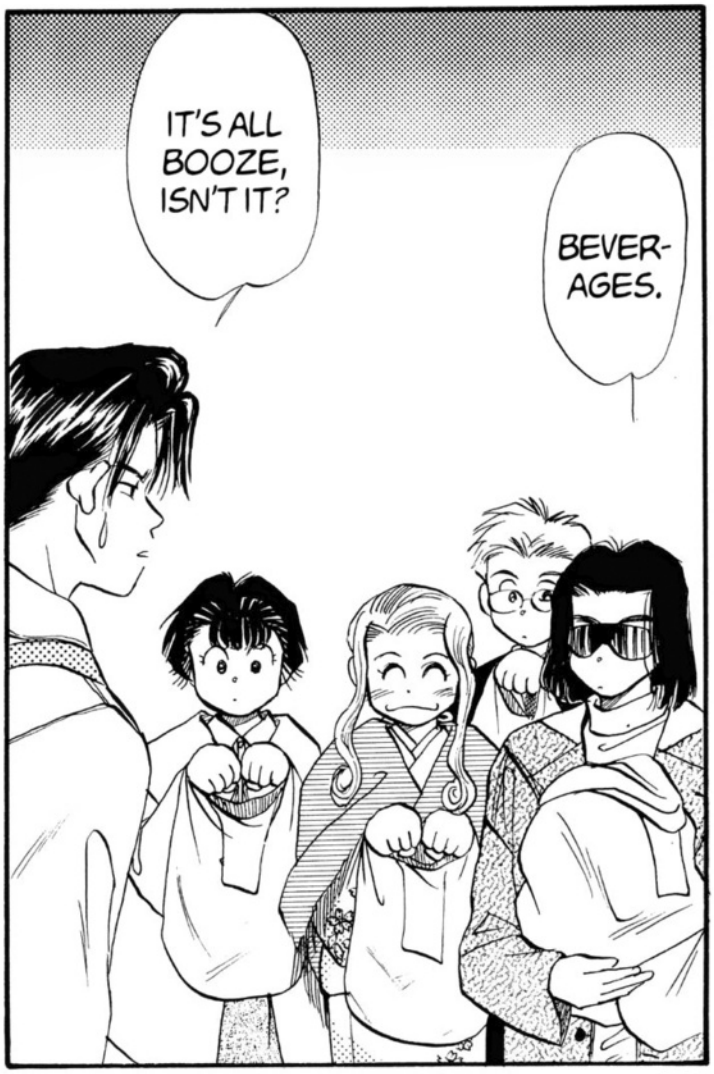
WHAT IS IT?
WE BROUGHT YOU SOME-THING.


IT'S JUST A REGULAR HOUSE. I GOT IT FROM MY PARENTS.
WOW! YOUR HOUSE IS BIG!
TMP
TMP
TMP

THEY'RE READY TO PARTY...
HAPPY NEW YEAR!

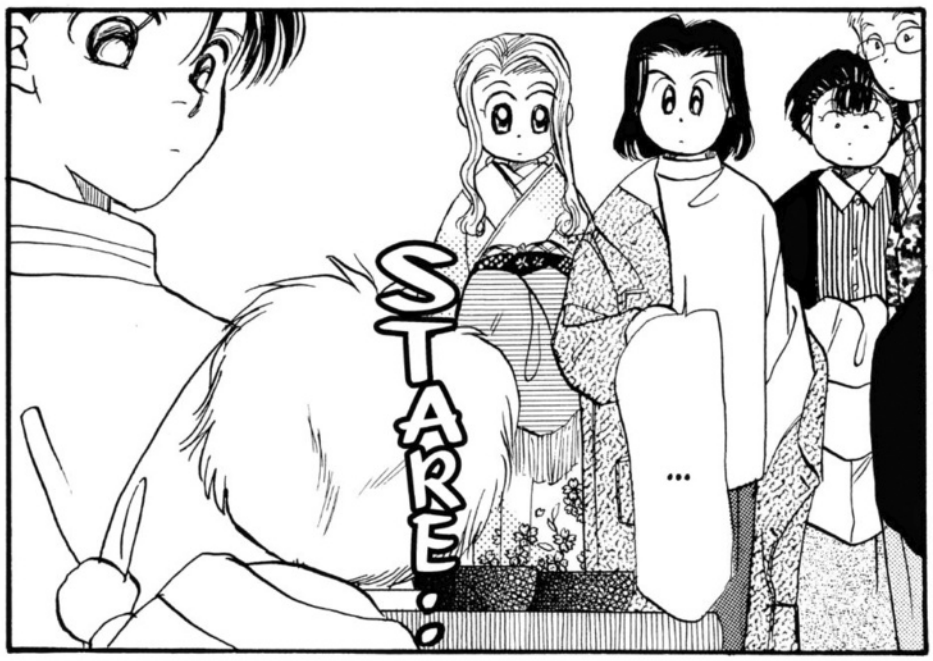
FOOD ...
WOW... FOOD ...
TF
TF

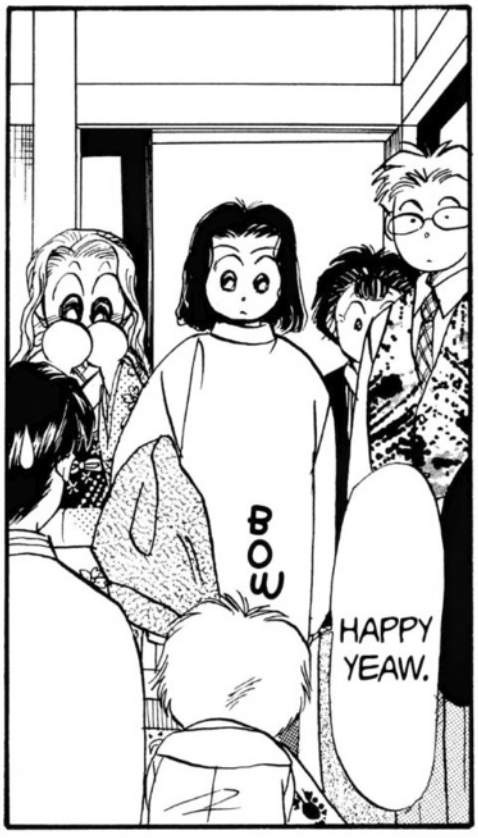
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
All Four
HAPPY NEW YEAR.


IT'S ALL BOOZE, ISN'T IT?
BEVER-AGES.

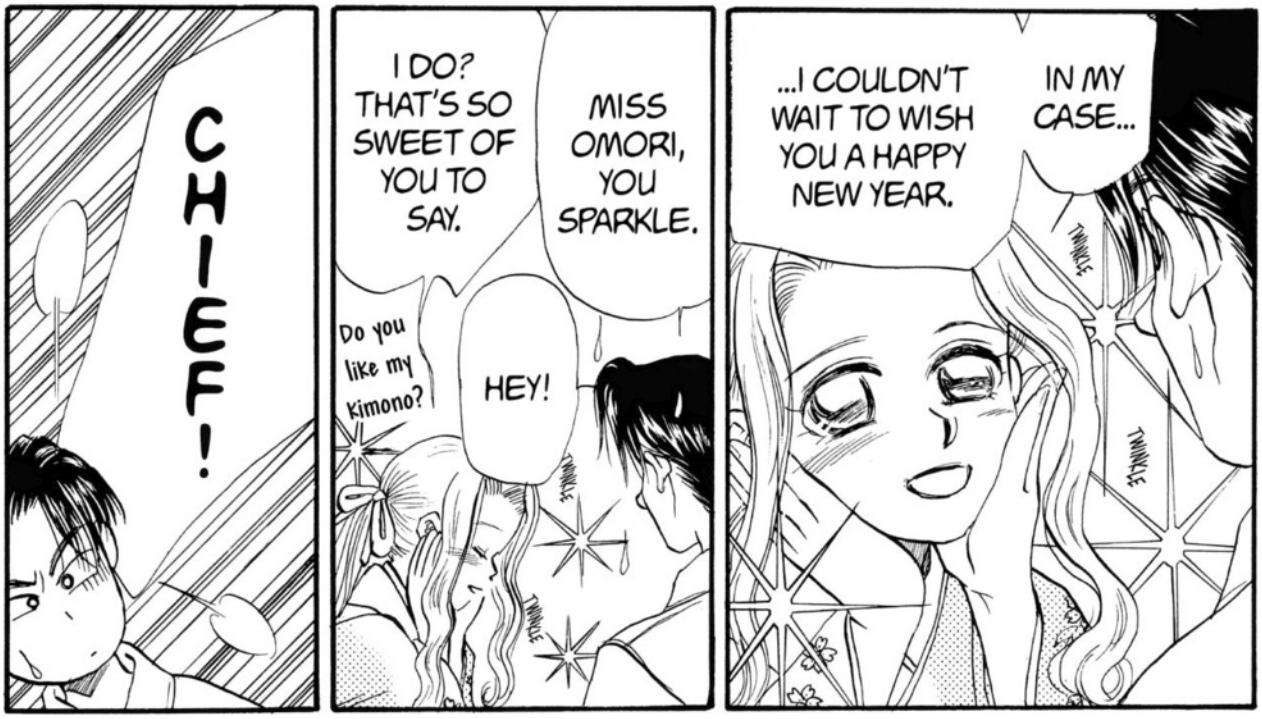
Author's Note 4

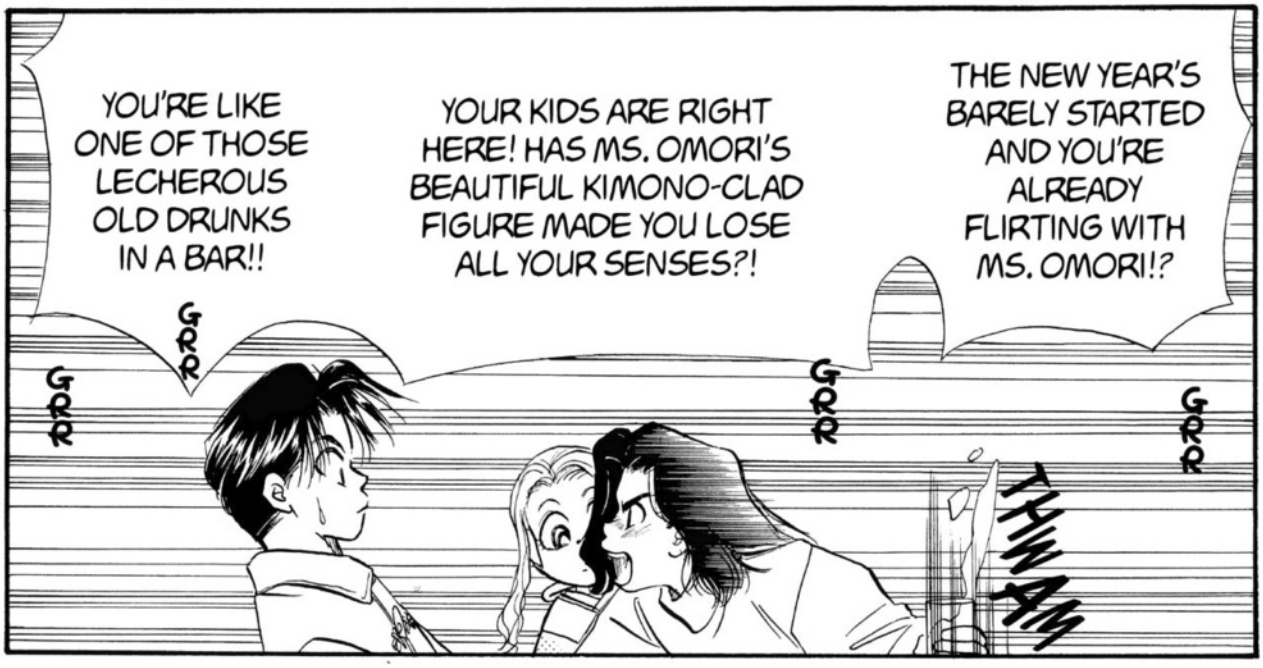
A silly story...
I moved to Tokyo almost five years ago, and people always asked me if I was afraid to live alone. (Now I live with my sister.) "Afraid of what?" I'd ask. "Of being alone? Of ghosts?" "Of being alone" was the answer. As for ghosts, I've never met one--of course, whenever I watch a ghost story on TV, I get scared--but I was never afraid just because I was alone. As a kid, I spent a lot of time by myself (even though I had a large family). I'm not comfortable being around people all the time. I prefer spending time alone, doing nothing. (My friends are exceptions, and they're precious to me.) But there was a time when I suddenly felt like I might forget how to talk. One morning I got up and spent the whole day indoors. Late that night, I suddenly realized that I hadn't said a word all day. I hadn't watched TV, or talked to myself, or sneezed, or even hiccuped. All I'd done was breathe in and out. That was scary. So to test myself I said "Ah!" in a loud voice. Then my worries evaporated. "I guess I still know how to speak," I thought. Now I can be alone without worrying.

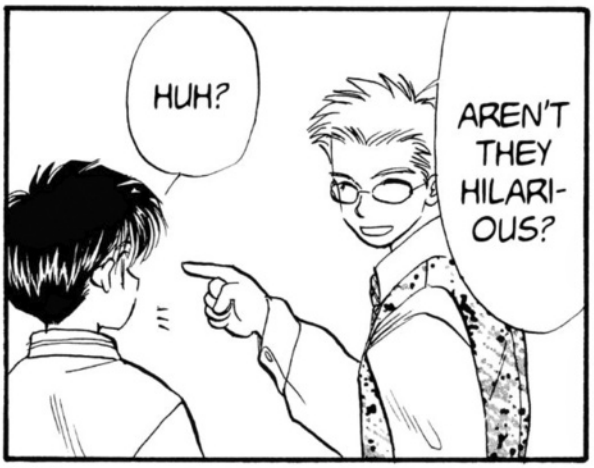


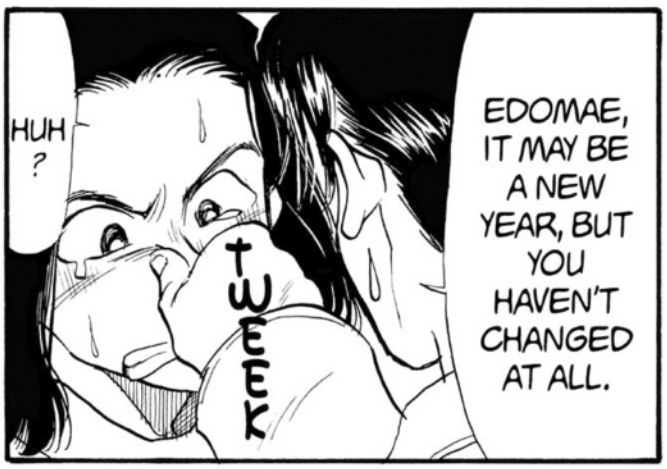


SO, UM...
SHOULDN'T YOU BE WITH YOUR FAMILIES? IT'S NEW YEAR'S, AFTER ALL.
GEEZ, EDOMAE. DON'T BE JEALOUS OF A LITTLE KID.
Huh?
YACK YACK YACK
GRR
YACK
COME ON. LET'S SIT DOWN...
WHOOM
YACK
I WENT ON A SKI TRIP AT THE END OF THE YEAR, SO I'M BROKE.
YET YOU HAD MONEY FOR LIQUOR.
YACK
MY FAMILY'S HERE IN TOKYO.
YACK
I'D HAVE TO GIVE NEW YEAR'S GIFTS TO ALL MY RELATIVES' KIDS.


CHIEF!
I DO? THAT'S SO SWEET OF YOU TO SAY.
MISS OMORI, YOU SPARKLE.
Do you like my kimono?
HEY!
TWINKLE
...I COULDN'T WAIT TO WISH YOU A HAPPY NEW YEAR.
IN MY CASE...
TWINKLE
TWINKLE


YOU'RE LIKE ONE OF THOSE LECHEROUS OLD DRUNKS IN A BAR!!
YOUR KIDS ARE RIGHT HERE! HAS MS. OMORI'S BEAUTIFUL KIMONO-CLAD FIGURE MADE YOU LOSE ALL YOUR SENSES?!
THE NEW YEAR'S BARELY STARTED AND YOU'RE ALREADY FLIRTING WITH MS. OMORI!?
GRR
GRR
GRR
GRR
THWAM


HUH?
AREN'T THEY HILARI-OUS?

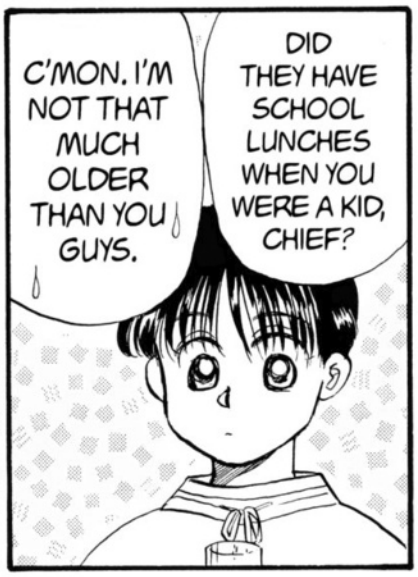

HUH ?
TWEEK
EDOMAE, IT MAY BE A NEW YEAR, BUT YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED AT ALL.

YOU'RE SO CUTE WITH THOSE BANGS.
YOU NEVER SHOW YOUR AGE, CHIEF.
GEEZ, I'M ONLY IN MY THIRTIES.

THE CHIEF AND EDOMAE ARE ALWAYS AT EACH OTHER'S THROATS.
HUH?

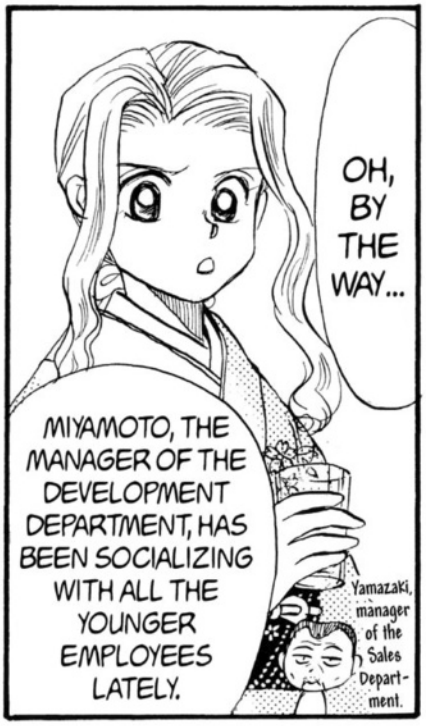
DAD'S FUNNY WHEN HE'S PLAYING "THE CHIEF."

HMM ...

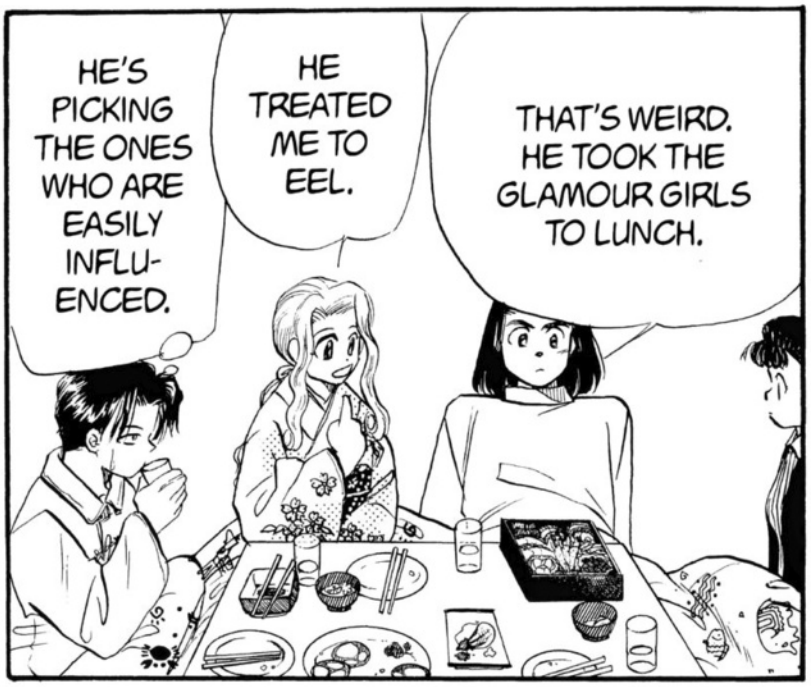

C'MON. I'M NOT THAT MUCH OLDER THAN YOU GUYS.
DID THEY HAVE SCHOOL LUNCHES WHEN YOU WERE A KID, CHIEF?

OR ME.
HE NEVER ASKED ME.

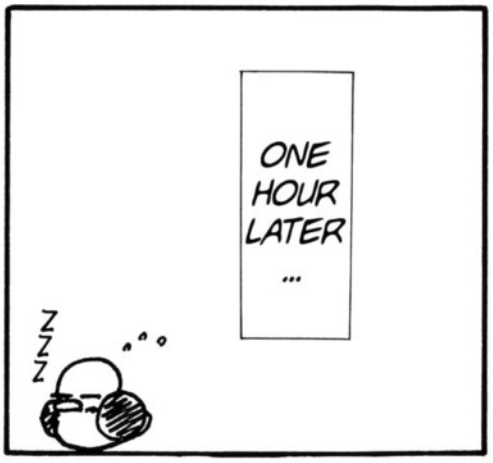
OH?
YEAH. HE TOOK ME DRINKING. TWICE.


OH, BY THE WAY...
MIYAMOTO, THE MANAGER OF THE DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, HAS BEEN SOCIALIZING WITH ALL THE YOUNGER EMPLOYEES LATELY.
Yamazaki, manager of the Sales Department.

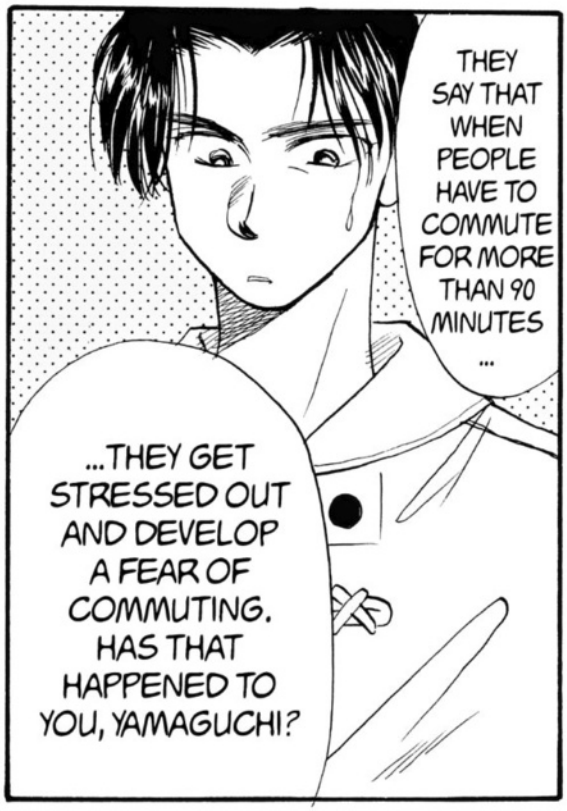
YOU EVER BEEN IN A FACTION, CHIEF?
OFFICE POLITICS DON'T INTEREST ME.
WHAT A MESS...
Mm... Mm...
HUHUH!
HUHUH!


HE'S PICKING THE ONES WHO ARE EASILY INFLU-ENCED.
HE TREATED ME TO EEL.
THAT'S WEIRD. HE TOOK THE GLAMOUR GIRLS TO LUNCH.

HUH? YOU THINK SO?
MAYBE HE'S TRYING TO WIN PEOPLE OVER TO FORM A FACTION.
MANAGER MIYAMOTO WAS BROUGHT IN FROM ANOTHER COMPANY.


ONE HOUR LATER ...
ZZZ

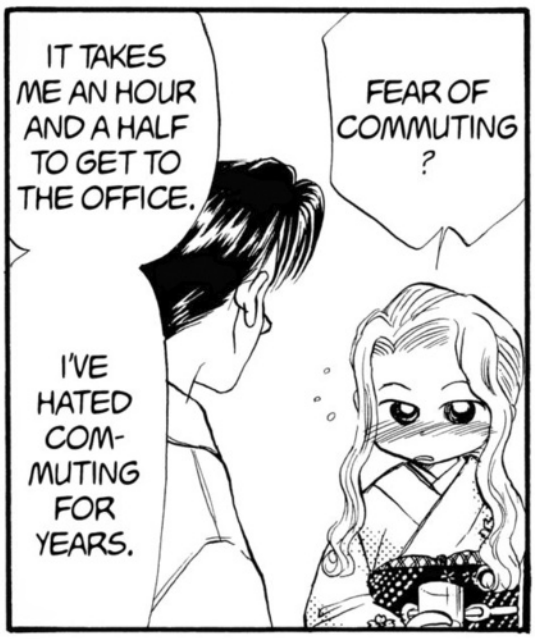
WOW, THEY SURE DO DRINK A LOT.
DEAD DRUNK
YOU GUYS CAN MAKE IT HOME, I HOPE.
ZZZ
KLANK
KLANK


THEY SAY THAT WHEN PEOPLE HAVE TO COMMUTE FOR MORE THAN 90 MINUTES ...
...THEY GET STRESSED OUT AND DEVELOP A FEAR OF COMMUTING. HAS THAT HAPPENED TO YOU, YAMAGUCHI?

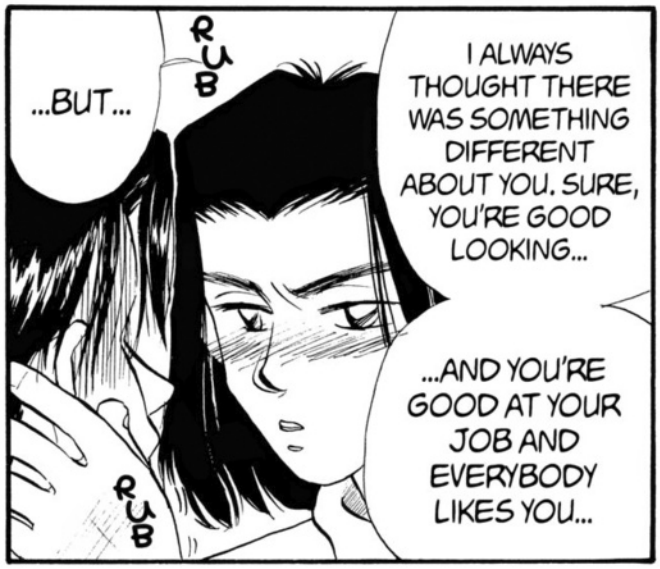
THE COMMUTE'S A NIGHTMARE.
I...I LIVE IN SAITAMA PREFECTURE.
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE

...
NODNOD
SWUP
OHH... MORNINGS ARE A NIGHTMARE.

I CAN'T STAND BEING SQUEEZED FROM ALL SIDES.
IT WEARS ME OUT.
WHENEVER I HAVE A DAY OFF, MY WHOLE BODY FEELS LIGHTER.

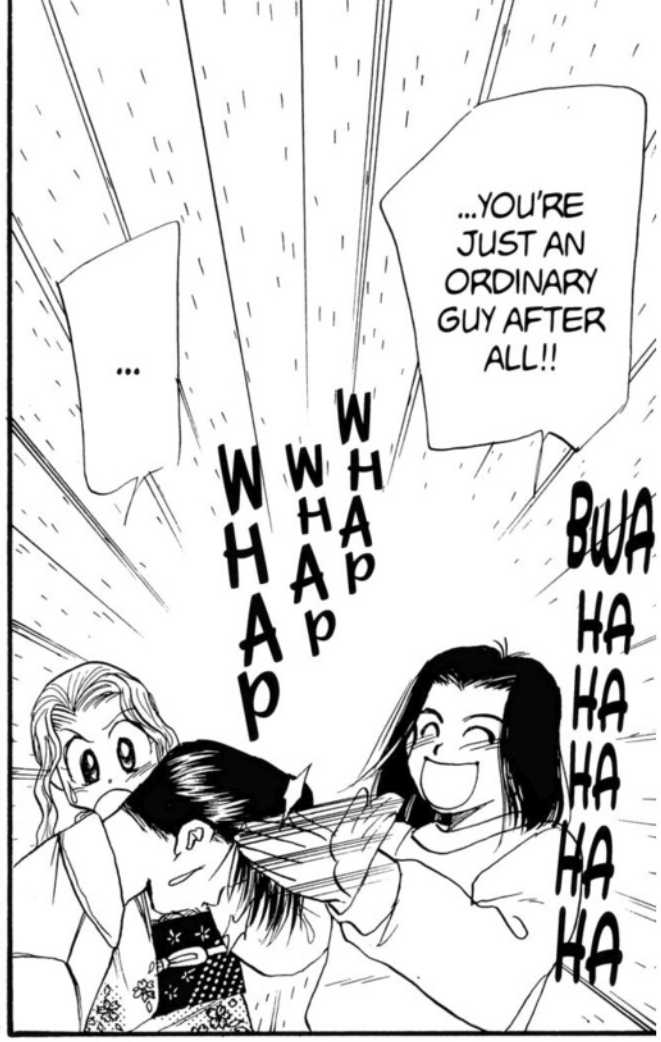

FEAR OF COMMUTING ?
IT TAKES ME AN HOUR AND A HALF TO GET TO THE OFFICE.
I'VE HATED COM-MUTING FOR YEARS.

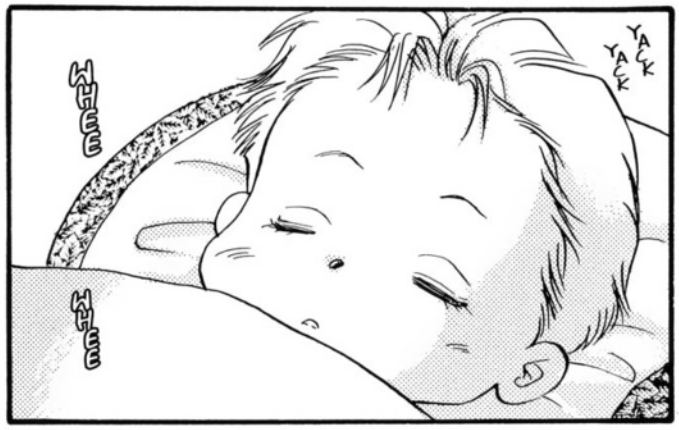
BWAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
TWITCH
TWITCH
TWITCH


I ALWAYS THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU. SURE, YOU'RE GOOD LOOKING...
...AND YOU'RE GOOD AT YOUR JOB AND EVERYBODY LIKES YOU...
...BUT...
RUB
RUB

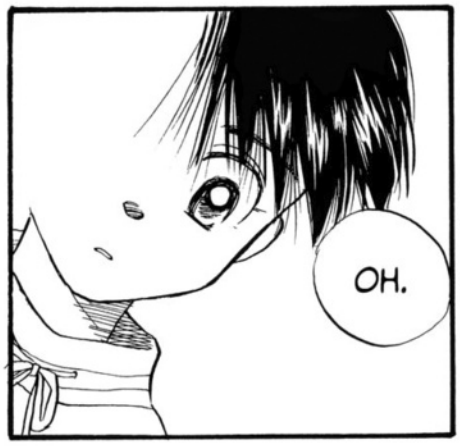
CHIEF. CHIEF...
HUH?
COME CLOSER, WILL YOU?
WHISP
WHISP

WA HA HA HA
YACK YACK


...YOU'RE JUST AN ORDINARY GUY AFTER ALL!!
...
WHAP WHAP WHAP WHAP
BWA HA HA HA HA HA HA


YACK YACK
WHEEE WHEEE

SHHF...


OH.

DING-DONG
KLAK

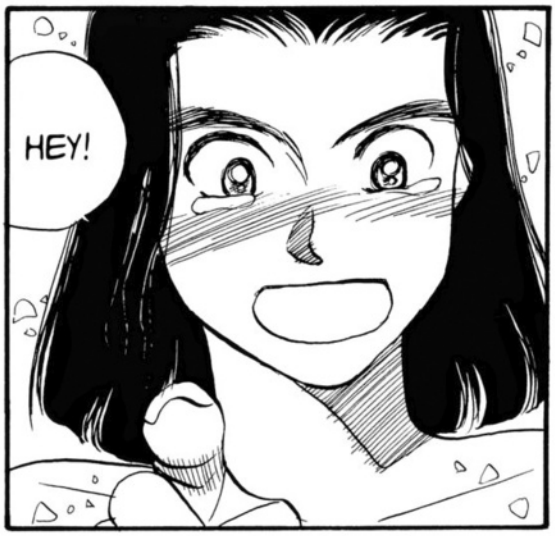
This kimchee's good.
THEY'RE ALL ACTING CRAZY.
WA HA HA HA HA

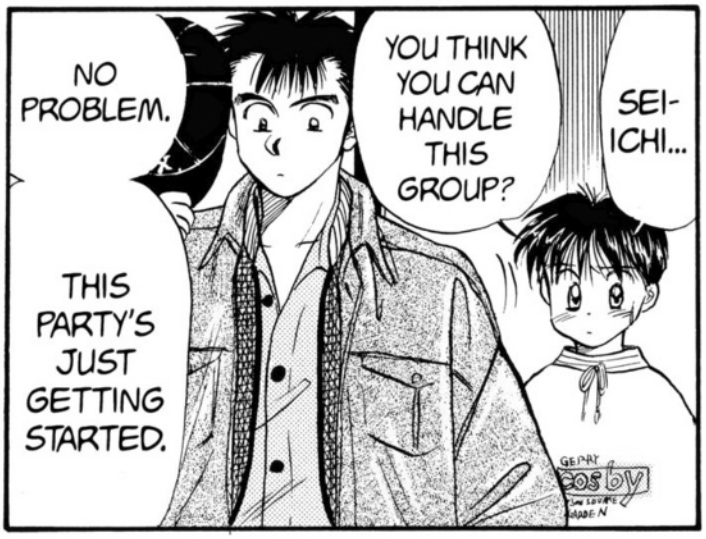
CAN WE COME IN?
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
YOU HAVE COMPANY? THERE'RE A LOT OF SHOES OUT HERE.
DAD'S WORK FRIENDS ARE HERE.
GERRY
Goo.
REALLY? SHOULD WE COME BACK LATER?
NO, I THINK IT'S ALL RIGHT.
GRR...
DRINKING!? IS THERE ANYTHING LEFT?
I THINK SO.
But they've all had a lot to drink.
SOUNDS LIKE THEY'RE HAVING A GOOD TIME.
THEY'VE ALL BEEN DRINKING. I DON'T GET ANY OF IT.
BWAHAHAHAHAHAHA
YAWN
YAWN

BWA HA HA HA HA HA
DAD! SEIICHI, TOMOKO, AND TAICHI ARE HERE.

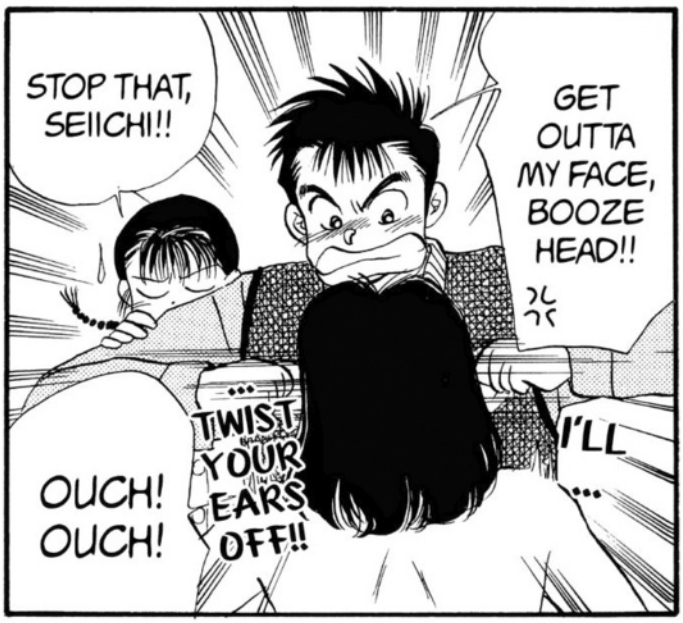
JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE?
WE WON'T STAY LONG.
YOU GOT DRUNK AND TOOK YOUR CLOTHES OFF IN FRONT OF MY MOTHER!
TOMOKO?
GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE

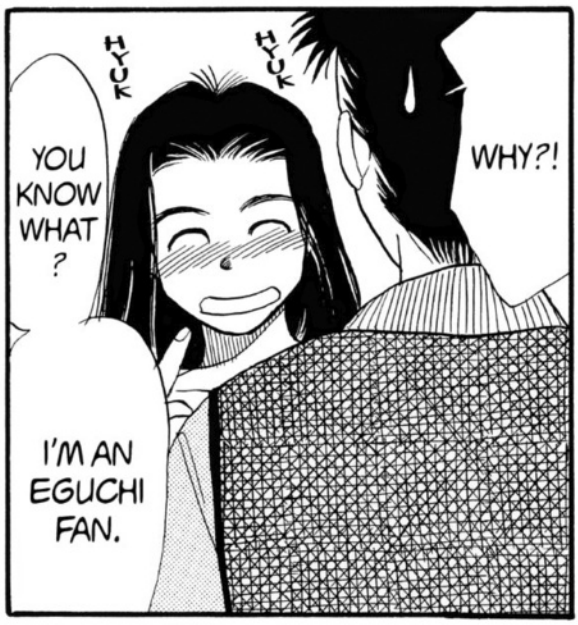
You're brave ...
Whoa ...
...huh, Lady?
HUH? SEIICHI'S HERE?
I'll make you look pretty, Yamaguchi.
Take it all off!
BWA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA


HEY!

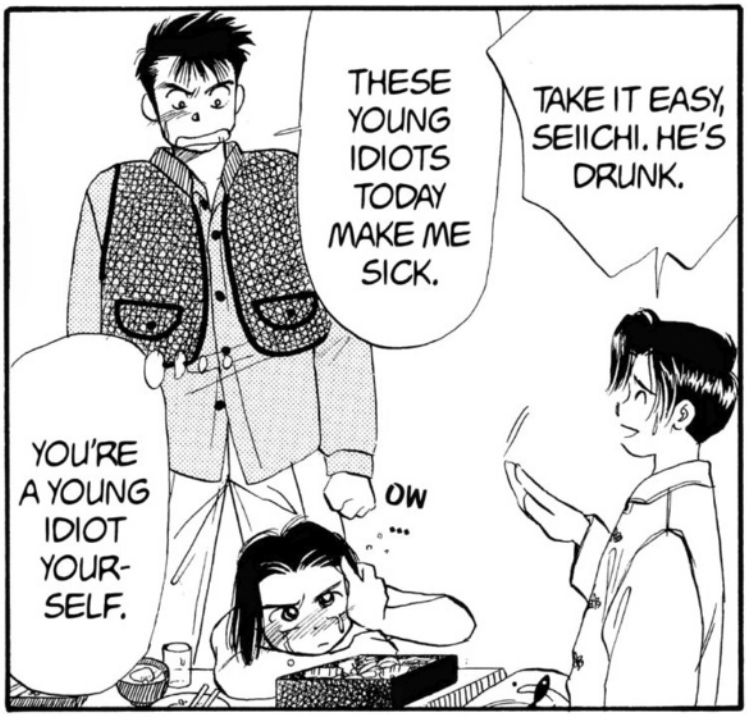

NO PROBLEM.
THIS PARTY'S JUST GETTING STARTED.
YOU THINK YOU CAN HANDLE THIS GROUP?
SEI-ICHI...

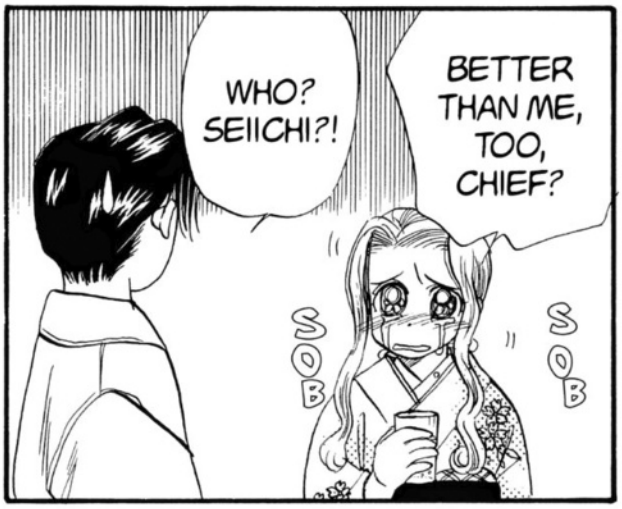
YOU TWO KNOW EACH OTHER?
NO.
LISTEN, YOU...
IT'S YOU!!
HUH?
YOU LIKE SOCCER, RIGHT?
HUH?
WHAP
YES, YOU DO!! I SEE IT IN YOUR FACE! WHAT'S YOUR TEAM?
I THINK ...
WHAT?!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? I'M A BASEBALL FAN.
...YOU'RE EITHER A KARASAWA OR A GIBA FAN!!
Fingernail
WHATEVER. JUST PUT YOUR CLOTHES ON.
He's giggling?
HEE HEE HEE HEE
THEN LEMME TELL YOU SOME-THIN'...
PUT 'EM ON!!

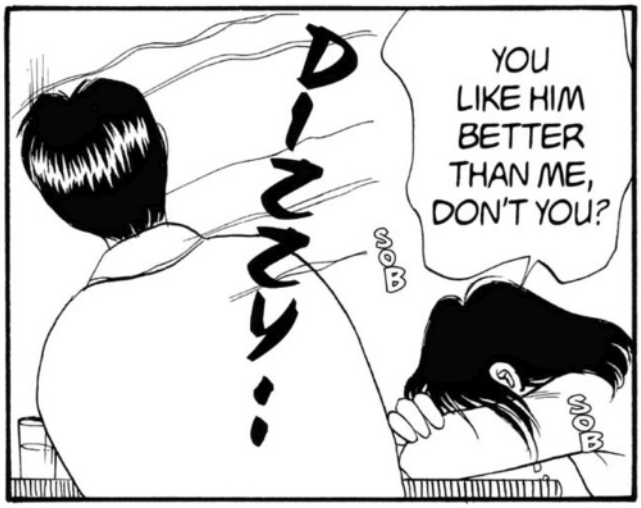

STOP THAT, SEIICHI!!
GET OUTTA MY FACE, BOOZE HEAD!!
TWIST YOUR EARS OFF!!
OUCH! OUCH!
I'LL ...


HYUK
HYUK
YOU KNOW WHAT ?
WHY?!
I'M AN EGUCHI FAN.

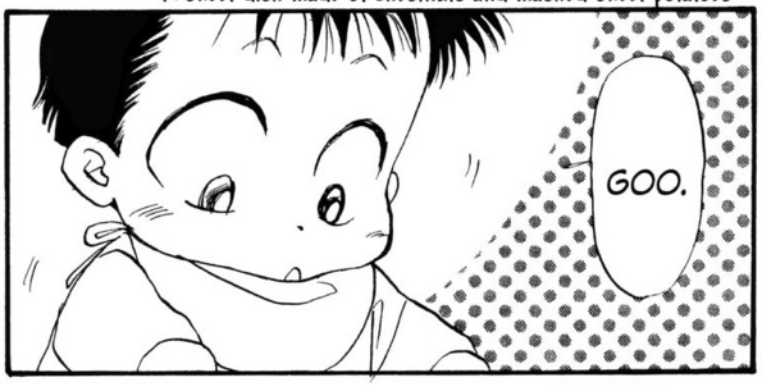
WHAT?!
CHIEF!
TWITCH

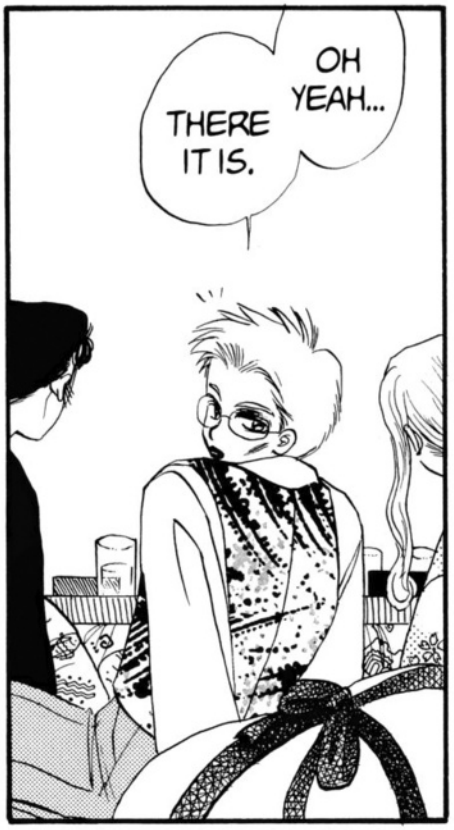

THESE YOUNG IDIOTS TODAY MAKE ME SICK.
TAKE IT EASY, SEIICHI. HE'S DRUNK.
YOU'RE A YOUNG IDIOT YOUR-SELF.
OW ...


WHO? SEIICHI?!
BETTER THAN ME, TOO, CHIEF?
SOB
SOB


YOU LIKE HIM BETTER THAN ME, DON'T YOU?
DIZZY...
SOB
SOB

*A sweet dish made of chestnuts and mashed sweet potatoes





IT'S A PRESENT FROM US.

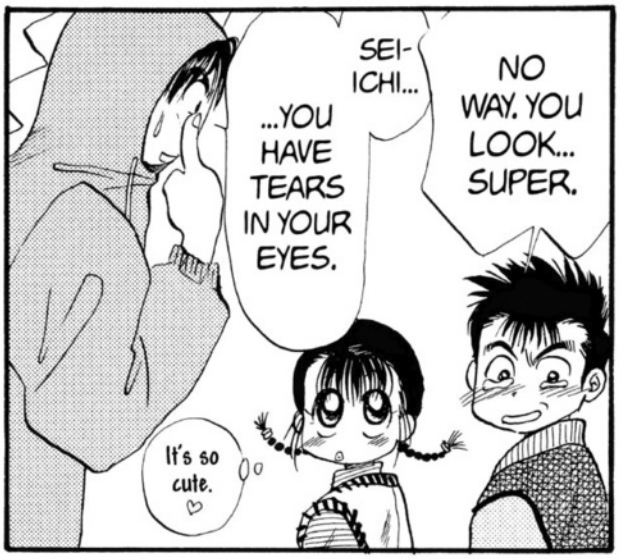
...TO THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HELP, AND TO ASK FOR YOUR CONTINUED GUIDANCE THIS YEAR.

THIS IS FOR YOU...

UM... SHOULD I ACCEPT THIS?
YES.
HUH?
THANK YOU.
YOU WALK PRETTY WELL, TAICHI.
DAD'S FUNNY WHEN HE'S PLAYING "THE CHIEF."
GOO.
THANKS A LOT.

I GOT A GLIMPSE OF WHAT MY DAD WAS LIKE AT WORK.

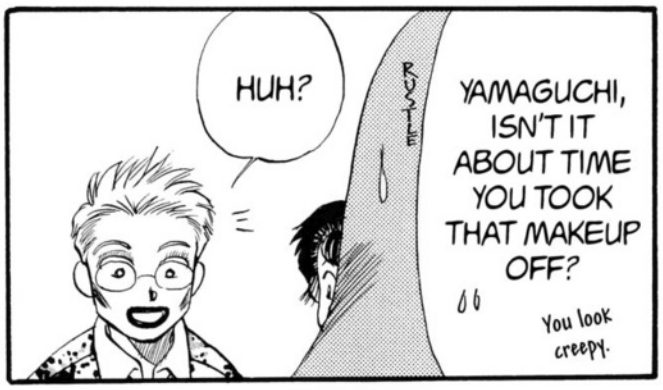
YOU LOOK GREAT, CHIEF!!
Sort of like Barney.
...

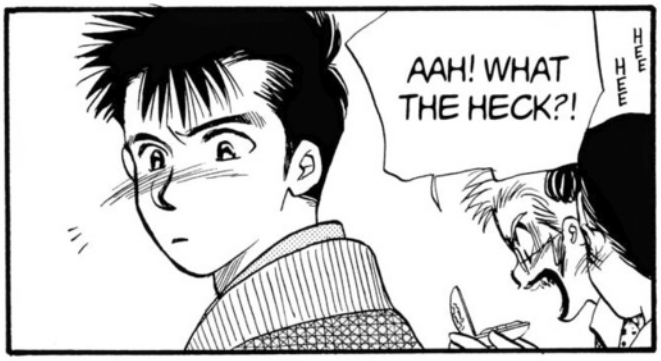

SEI-ICHI...
...YOU HAVE TEARS IN YOUR EYES.
NO WAY. YOU LOOK... SUPER.
It's so cute.

OH...
CHIEF, YOU'RE SO TALL THAT WE HAD TROUBLE FINDING DINOSAUR PAJAMAS THAT WOULD FIT YOU. I THINK THEY'RE A LITTLE SHORT.
REGULAR PAJAMAS WOULD'VE BEEN JUST FINE.
Hehe
Hehe
Hehe

I LOOK LIKE AN IDIOT.
LIARS.

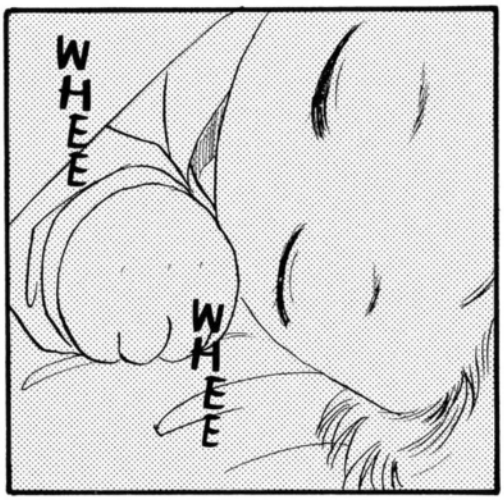
ZZZ
ZZZ
ZZZ
...


HUH?
RUSTLE
YAMAGUCHI, ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU TOOK THAT MAKEUP OFF?
You look creepy.


AAH! WHAT THE HECK?!
HEE HEE

HUH?
GIMME YOUR MAKEUP.

HUH?


WHEE
WHEE

SNORE
SNORE
SNORE
ZZZ
ZZZ

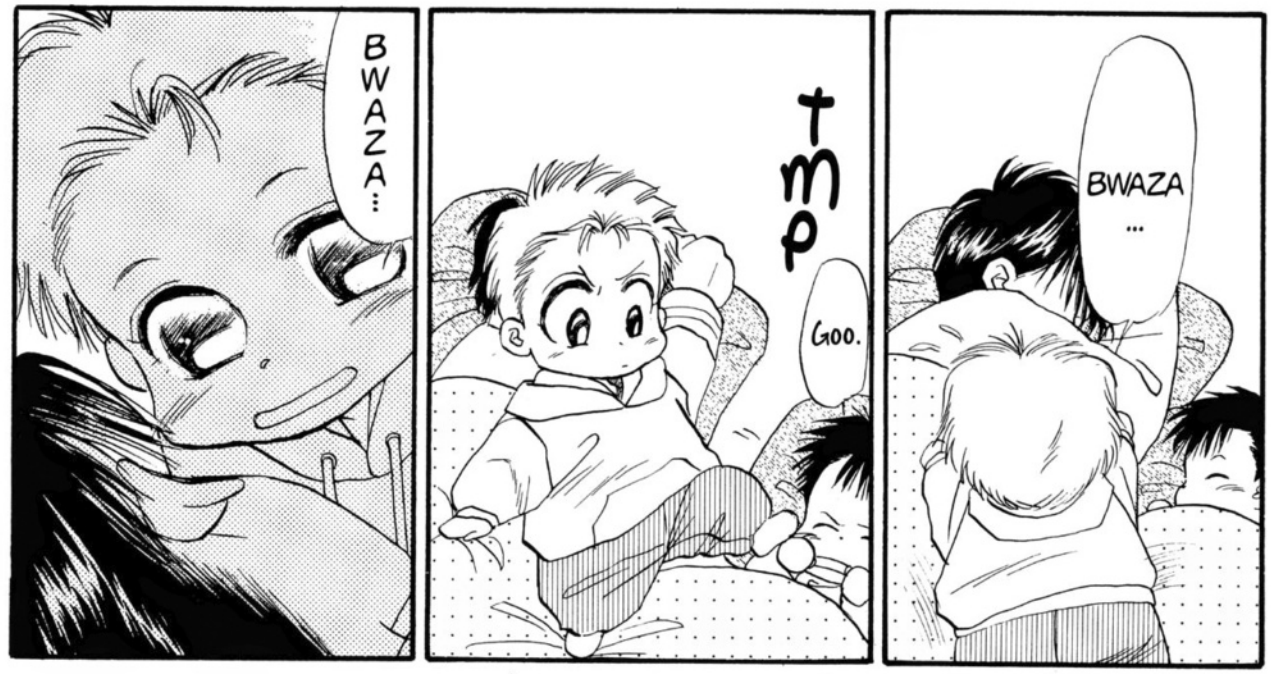
BWAZA...
DADDY...

KLAK...
OH...

BWAZA...
BWAZA...
TUP
TUP
ZZZ
ZZZ

Oh...
Oh...
TMP
UNH... OW...

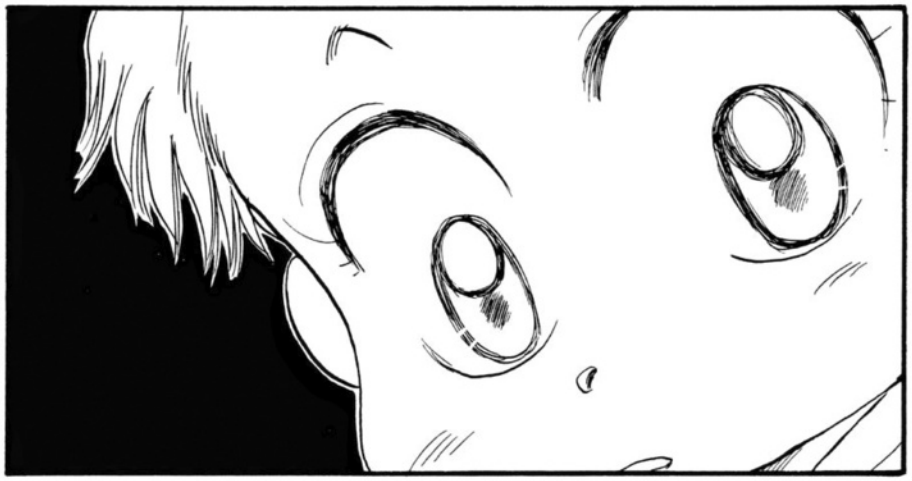
ZZZ
ZZZ

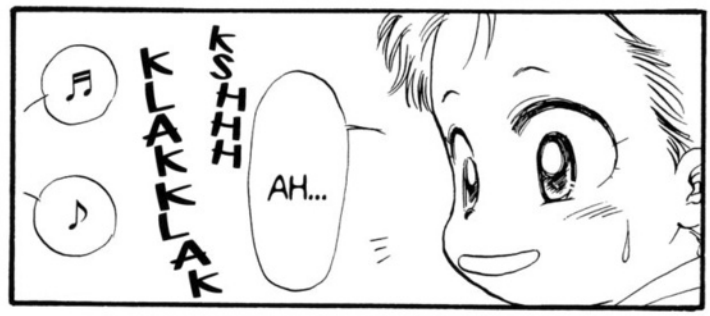

BWAZA...

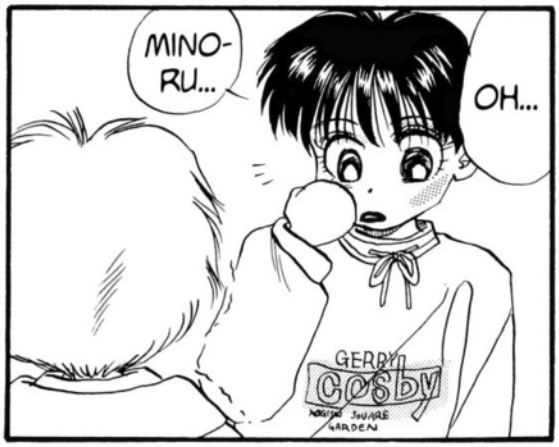
tmp
GOO.

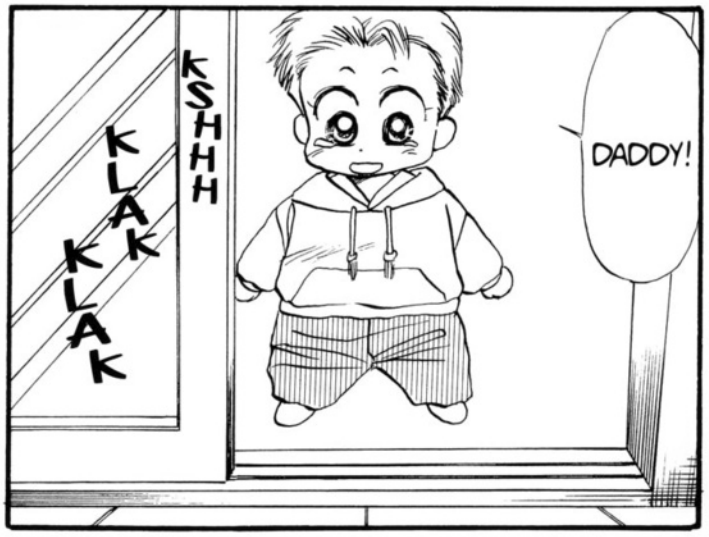
BWAZA
...

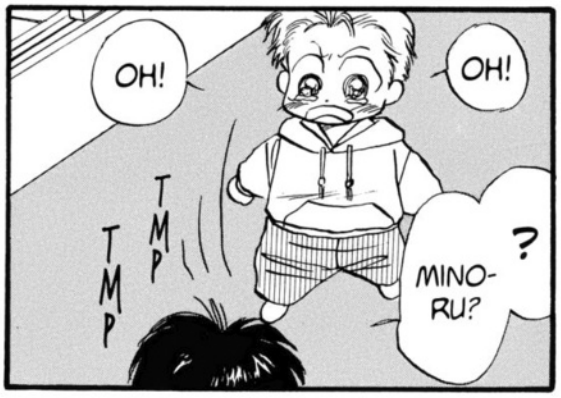
HUH?

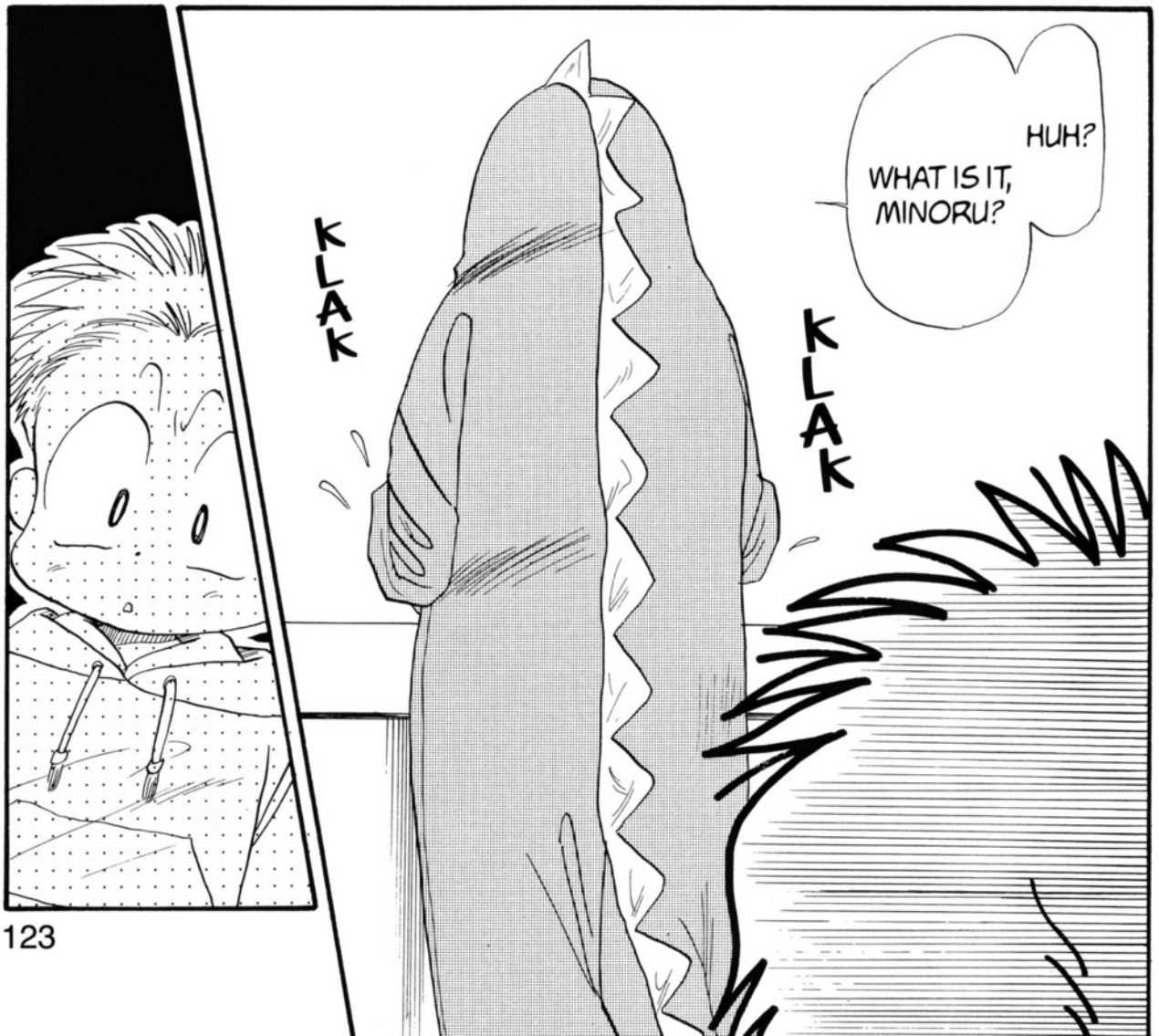



KSHHH
KLAKKLAK
AH...

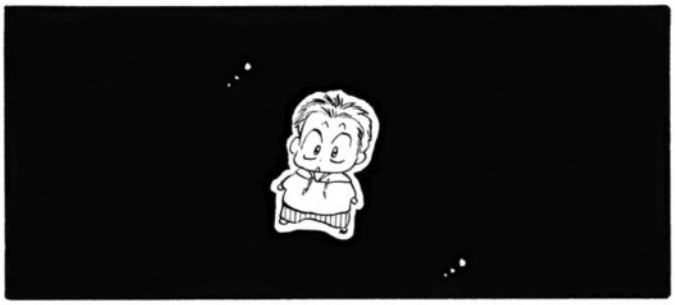

MINO-RU...
OH...
GERRY'S
Cosby


KSHHH
KLAK
KLAK
DADDY!


OH!
OH!
TMP
TMP
MINO-RU?
?


KLAK
KLAK
HUH?
WHAT IS IT, MINORU?

THAT DAY...



...MINORU'S SCREAM COULD BE HEARD FOR MILES AROUND.

DURING NEW YEAR'S ...

...BE CAREFUL NOT TO OVERDO IT.

CHIEF, CAN I SPEND THE NIGHT?

YACK

BLUP

BLUP

YACK

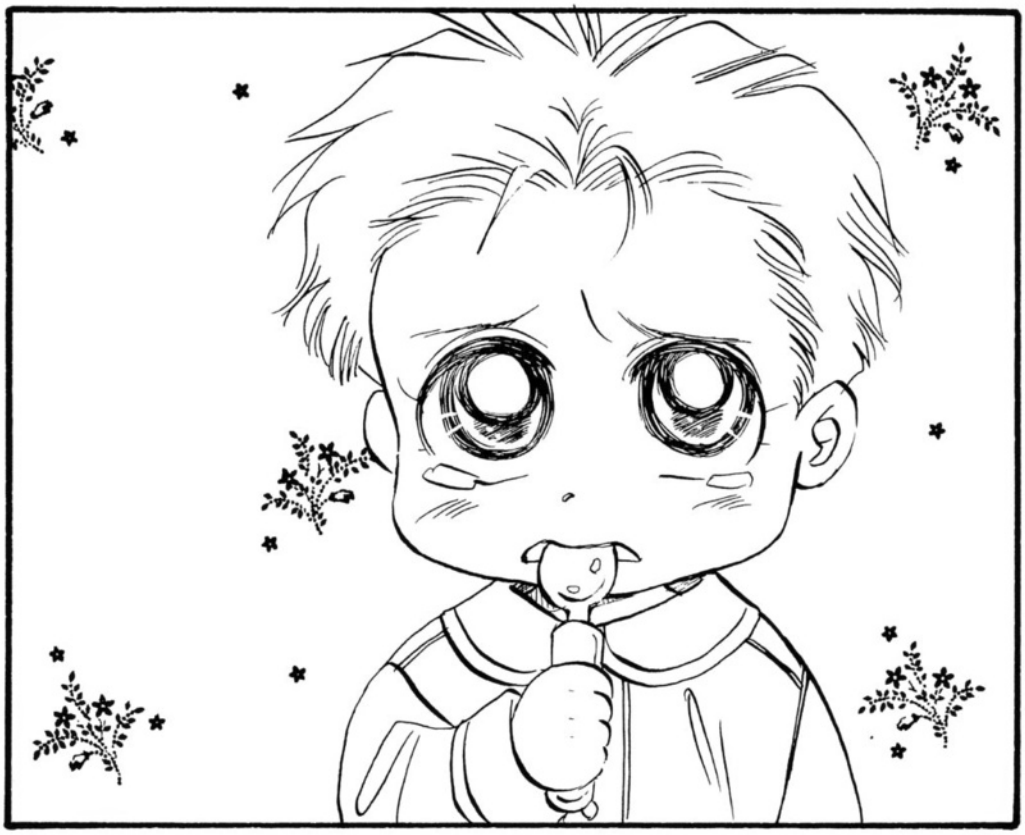
I WAS REALLY TIRED.

YOU DIDN'T EVEN STIR WHEN I PUT THE MAKEUP ON YOU.

Ubb ...

WERE YOU AFRAID OF ME, SON?

Chapter 42/The End

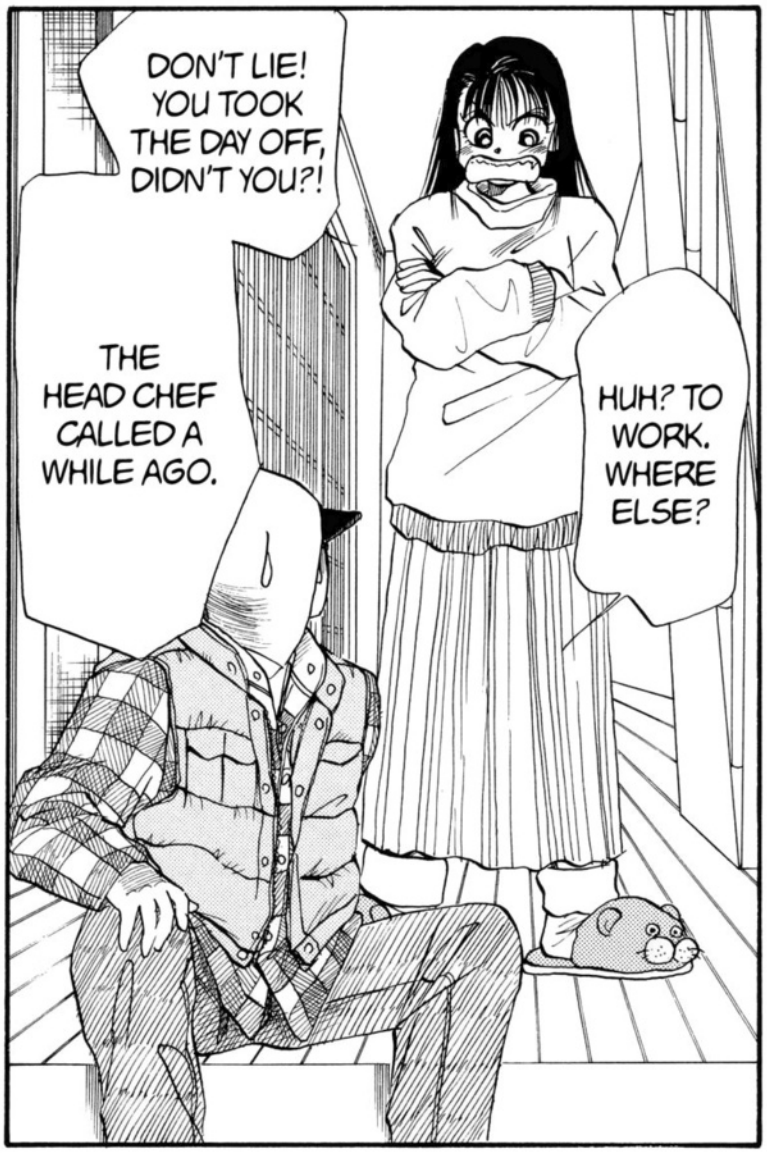


BABY & Me
Chapter 43

SEIICHI !!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING ?!

...

SO? CAN'T A GUY TAKE A DAY OFF SOMETIMES?
BUT I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP TO.
I'M NOT COM-PLAINING ABOUT THAT.


DON'T LIE! YOU TOOK THE DAY OFF, DIDN'T YOU?!
THE HEAD CHEF CALLED A WHILE AGO.
HUH? TO WORK. WHERE ELSE?

STATION FRONT
PACHINKO
GRANDE
10:00 TODAY
NEW MACHINES!!
YOU'RE GOING HERE, AREN'T YOU?!

LOOK ME IN THE EYE AND SAY THAT!!
YOU'RE NUTS.
Up close, you can tell she's wearing contact lenses.

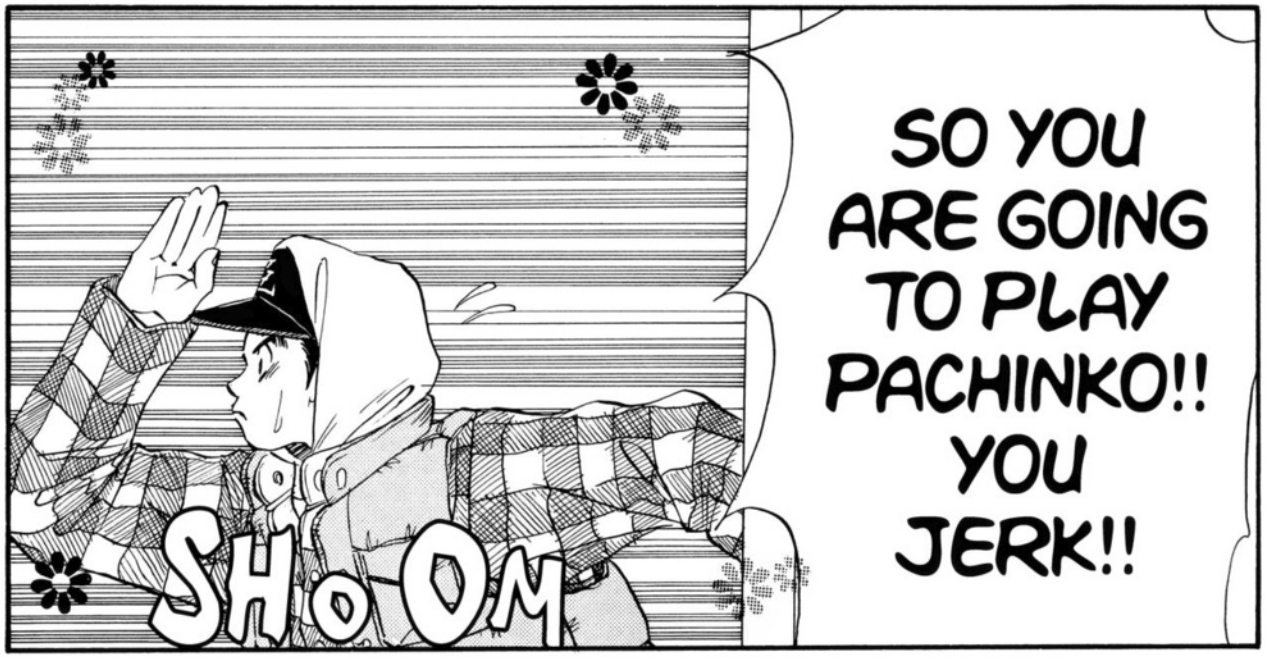
GEEZ ...

WELL? THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?!
PACHINKO, PACHINKO, PACHINKO, RIGHT?

IF YOU WIN, BUY SOME DISPOSABLE DIAPERS FOR TAICHI.
OKAY.

OOPS.
GULP

QUIT NAGGING! I'M JUST GONNA VISIT A FRIEND.
KLAK


SHOOM
SO YOU ARE GOING TO PLAY PACHINKO!! YOU JERK!!

OH.

!!

TOMOKO HATES PACHINKO.
SIGH ...
I WISH SOMEONE WOULD UNDER-STAND ME.

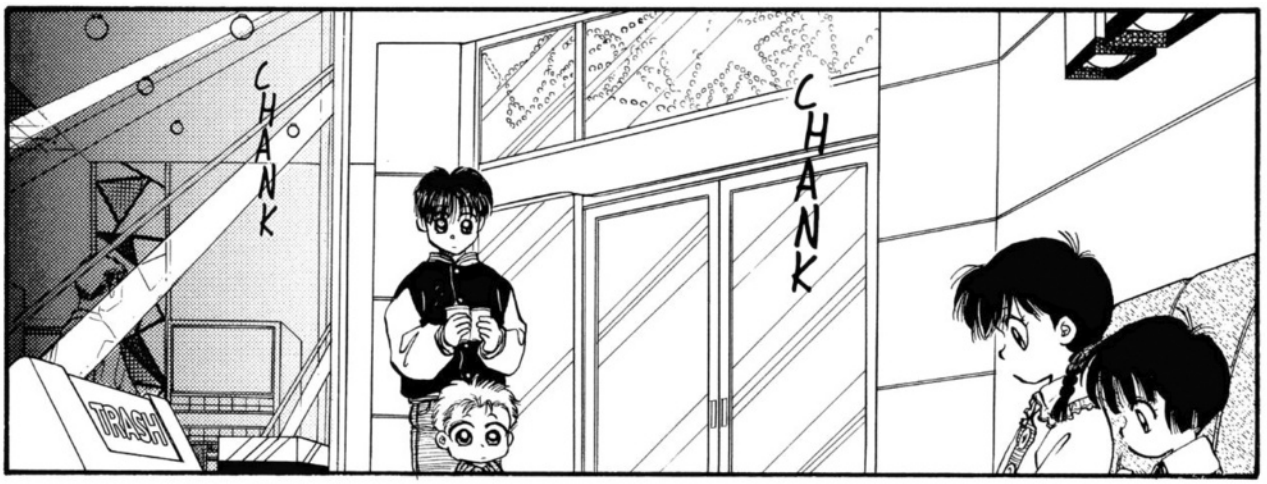
NO. THAT'S WHY WE'RE TAKING A WALK.
DON'T YOU TWO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO?
I'M GOING DOWN TOWARD THE STATION.
GOING SOME-WHERE, SEIICHI?
Uh...
Minoru

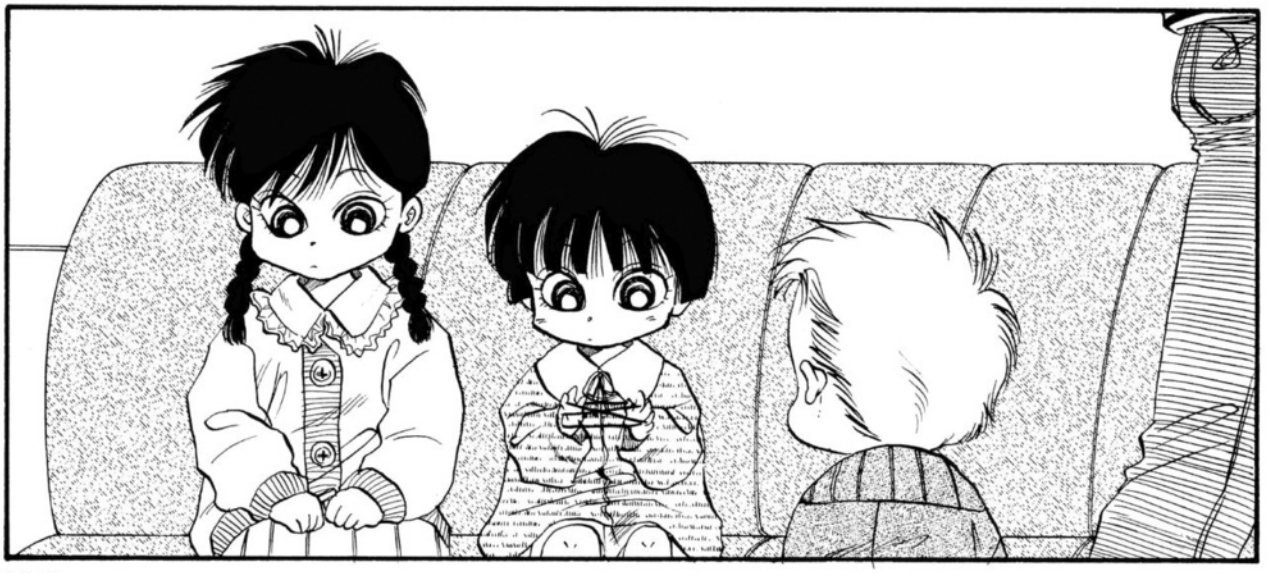
MINORU DIDN'T KNOW, BUT TAKUYA KNEW...
...
clueless
WANNA HAVE SOME FUN?
HEH♡
THIS PLACE IS PACKED.
CHANK
THAT'S A GRAND REOPENING FOR YOU.
PING PING
CHANK
BUT TAKUYA WAS A VERY AGREEABLE BOY.
...THAT SEIICHI WOULDN'T BE TAKING THEM ANYWHERE THEY OUGHT TO GO.
KLAKKLAK
PACHINKO GRANDE
IF I WIN I'LL BUY YOU SOME-THING.
CHANK
TAKUYA, WHY DON'T YOU AND MINORU BUY SOME JUICE AND SIT ON THE COUCH?
OKAY.
CHANK
Machine 99 to start.
Chang chang Chang chaka Chang-chang cha-cha-cha-cha-chang Boom ba-da ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba
PACHINKO GRANDE
MACHINES WIDE OPEN TODAY
MARIMO PRODUC

CHANGE
CHANK
BWAZA!! TOO WOUD!!
BEEP
PING
PING

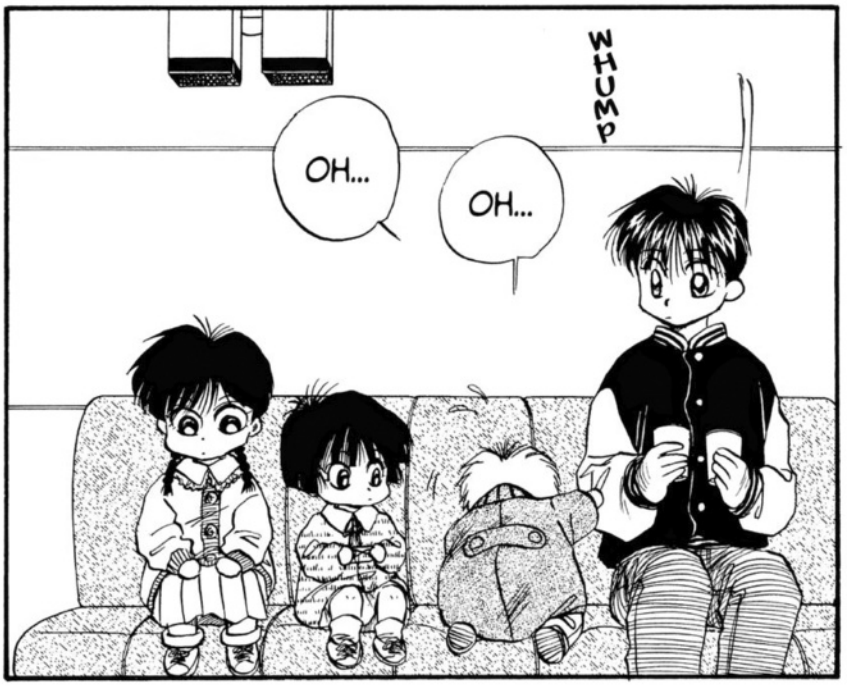
AH!
CHANK
BEE-BEEP
CHANK
PING
PING
PING
Machine 2 to start.

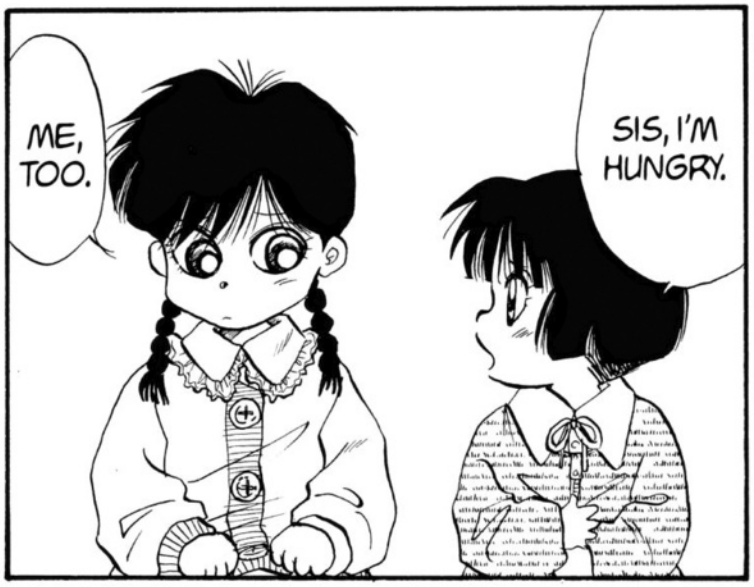
OKAY, LET'S GO SIT ON THE COUCH.
UH...
CHANGE
CHA-CHANK


CHANK
CHANK
TRASH

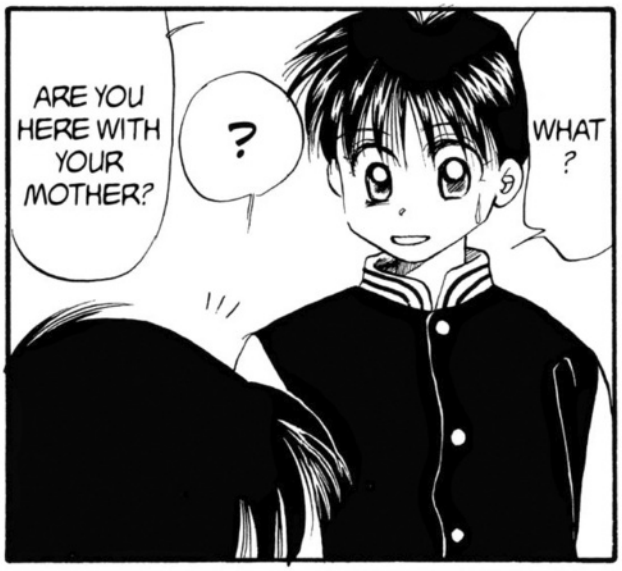


I GUESS SOME PEOPLE BRING THEIR KIDS HERE.
THEY MUST LOVE PACHINKO.
SIP
SIP


WHUMP
OH...
OH...


ME, TOO.
SIS, I'M HUNGRY.

GURGLE


ARE YOU HERE WITH YOUR MOTHER?
?
WHAT ?

WE HAVEN'T HAD ANYTHING TO EAT ALL DAY.

Author's Note 5

A Recent Mystery

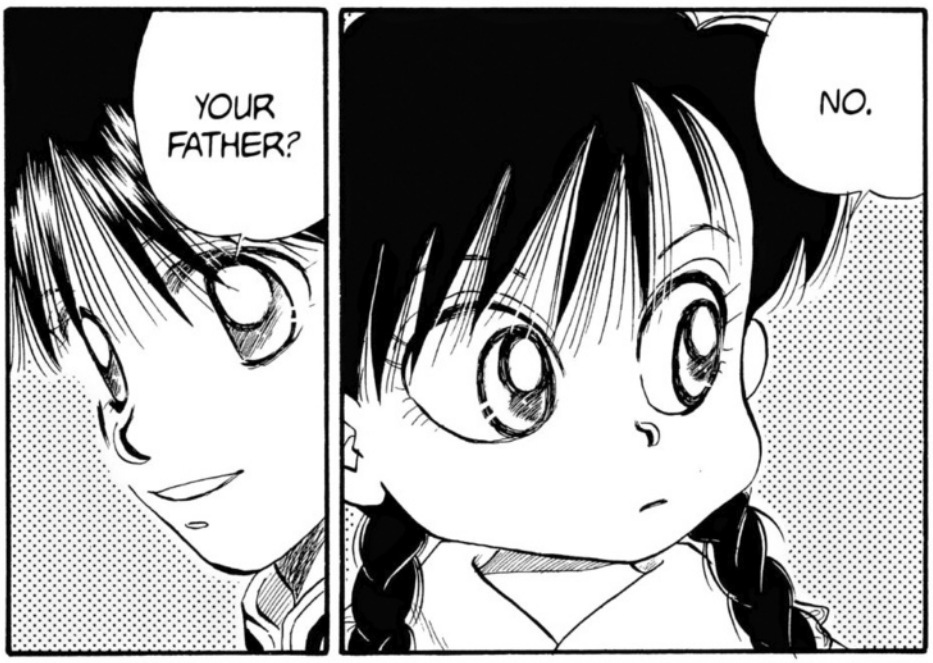
Are you supposed to eat the little clams in miso soup?

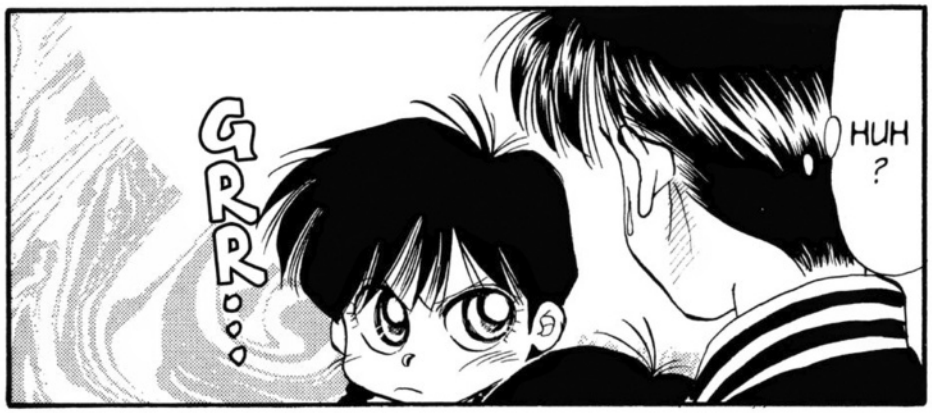
Well, it's really up to you, but as someone who loves miso soup with clams, I think you should eat them. Some people say they don't eat them because they're too much trouble to get out of the shell or that the clams are only used to flavor the stock, but I don't agree.

A Recent Mystery Solved

When I was a student, my teacher once wondered out loud why there were three polite prefixes in the word "omiotsuke." Words are often prefixed with "o" to make them more polite. The kanji character for this "o" 「御」 is sometimes read "go" or "mi." So the teacher believed that the "o" "mi" and "o" in "omiotsuke" were all the same character. The other day I remembered that. But when I looked the word up in a dictionary, I got a surprise. The word was written with different characters! Instead of "o-mi-o-tsuke" 「御御御汁」, it was "omi" 「御味」 (meaning miso) and "otsuke" 「御汁」 (meaning miso soup). So there weren't three polite prefixes added to the word "tsuke" at all! What a surprise!

Did everyone follow that? Little kids are probably wondering what I'm going on about. Teachers, please check your facts before you tell us stuff!!





HMM... I BET...
GASP
...THEIR MOM LEFT THEIR DAD BECAUSE HE WAS A PACHINKO ADDICT!

OUCH!
DIDN'T I TELL YOU THAT MOMMY'S COMING BACK TODAY?!
DON'T SAY THAT!!
TWEEK

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO BLAME SOMETHING, BLAME PACHINKO.

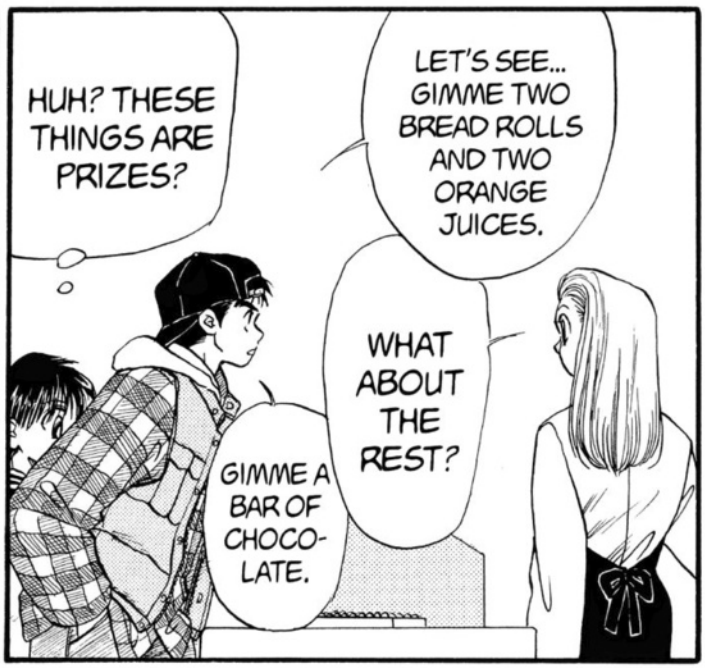
I'M SEVEN. I'M IN SECOND GRADE.
I'M FIVE.
HOW OLD ARE YOU TWO?
I'S TWO.

THIS NEW MACHINE IS GREAT.
IT KEEPS PAYING OUT.
CHANK

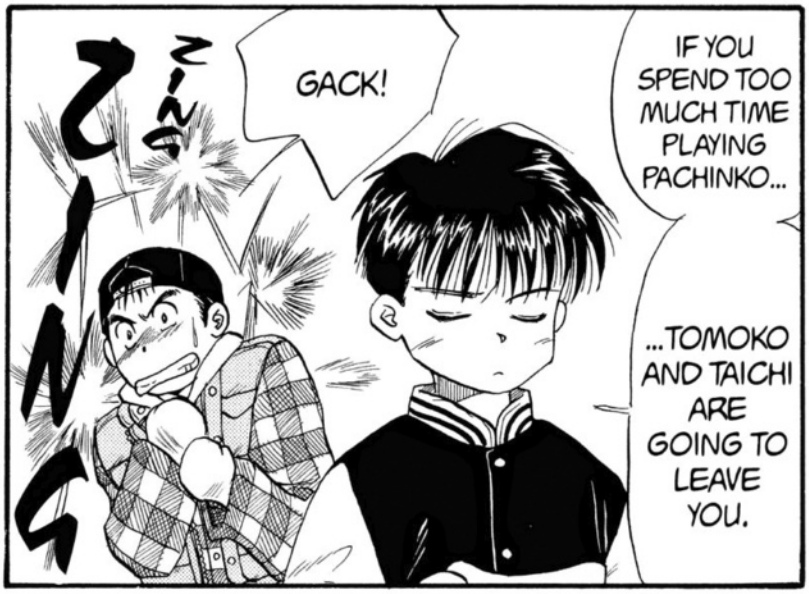
CHA-
CH
CHANK
CHANK

UM... THERE ARE TWO LITTLE GIRLS SITTING ON THE COUCH.
THEY SAY THEY HAVEN'T HAD ANYTHING TO EAT TODAY.
HUH?
SOME-THING WRONG ?
SEIICHI ...
IS IT SAFE TO LEAVE YOUR MACHINE? WON'T SOMEBODY TAKE IT?
IT'S FINE. DON'T WORRY.
I'll leave some balls and my cigarettes here.
HMPH!
KLANK
ARE THEIR PARENTS PLAYING PACHINKO?
I THINK SO.
WHAT?
KLAK..
HERE.
?

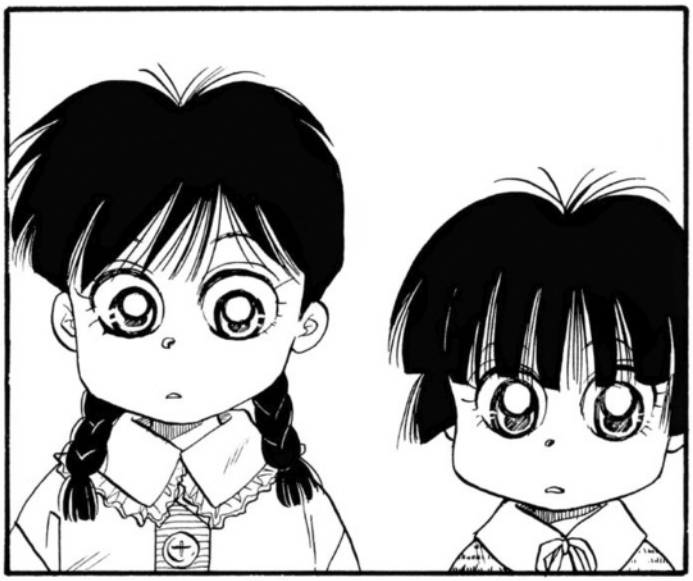
HERE.
HUH?
STARE...
WHAT'S WRONG ?


HUH? THESE THINGS ARE PRIZES?
LET'S SEE... GIMME TWO BREAD ROLLS AND TWO ORANGE JUICES.
WHAT ABOUT THE REST?
GIMME A BAR OF CHOCO-LATE.

HERE. EAT THIS.


GACK!
RING RING
IF YOU SPEND TOO MUCH TIME PLAYING PACHINKO...
...TOMOKO AND TAICHI ARE GOING TO LEAVE YOU.

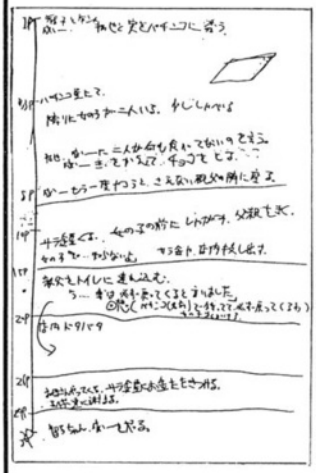
IT'S BREAD ROLLS AND JUICE.
OH... BUT...
OUR FRIEND CASHED IN HIS PACHINKO BALLS FOR THIS STUFF.



Author's Note 6

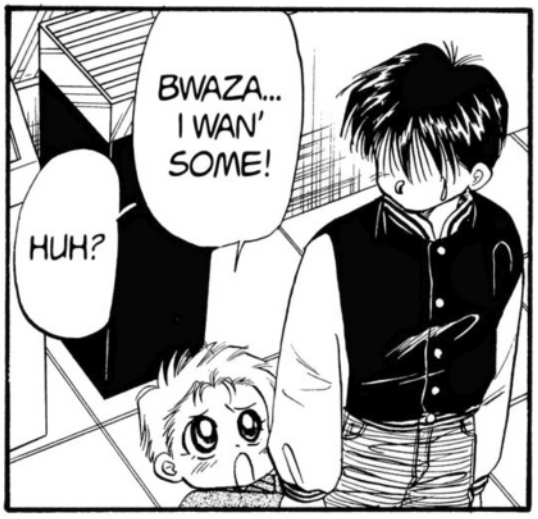
This is the order in which I work on my manga!! (I'll take excerpts from Chapter 43.)

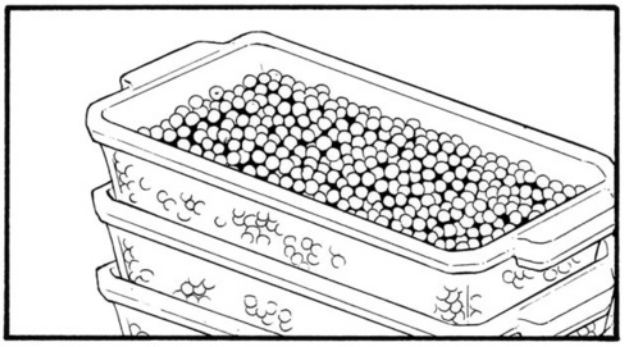
1. I mull over the story.
2. I create a plot. I decide how the story will proceed and work out a page plan. Otherwise, it won't come out to the right number of pages.



3. I design the characters. (These are from my notebook.)

Continued in Author's Note 7.





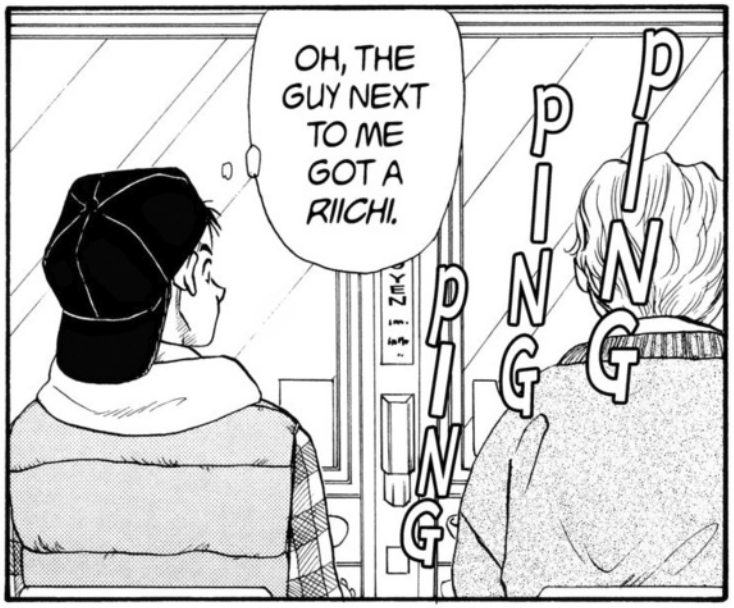
KLANK
KLANK

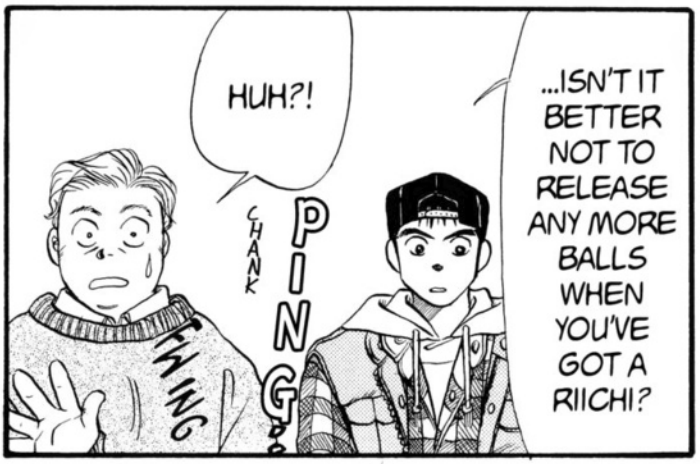
KLAK

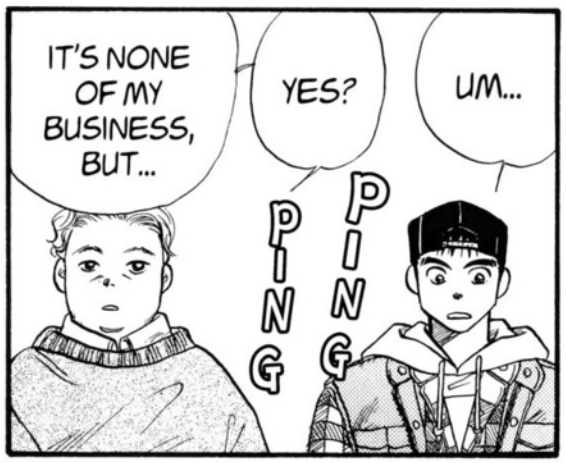
WHAT LUCK! THERE'S AN AUTOMATIC MACHINE OPEN. ♡
Heh heh

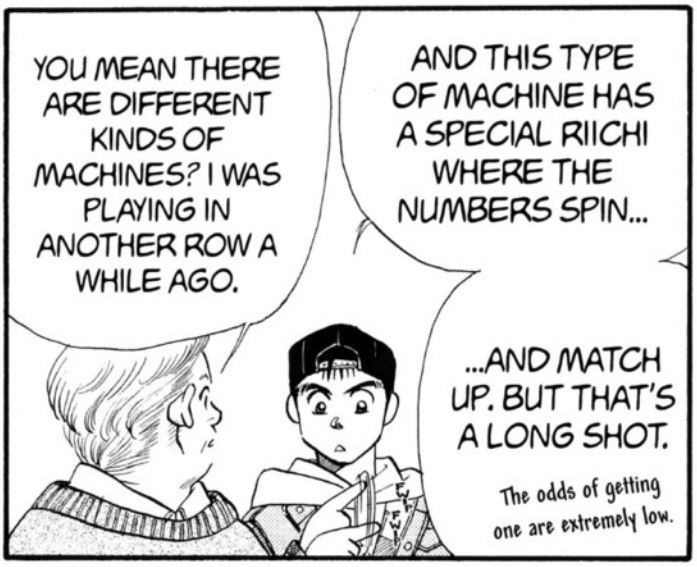
CHA-CHANK
OH.

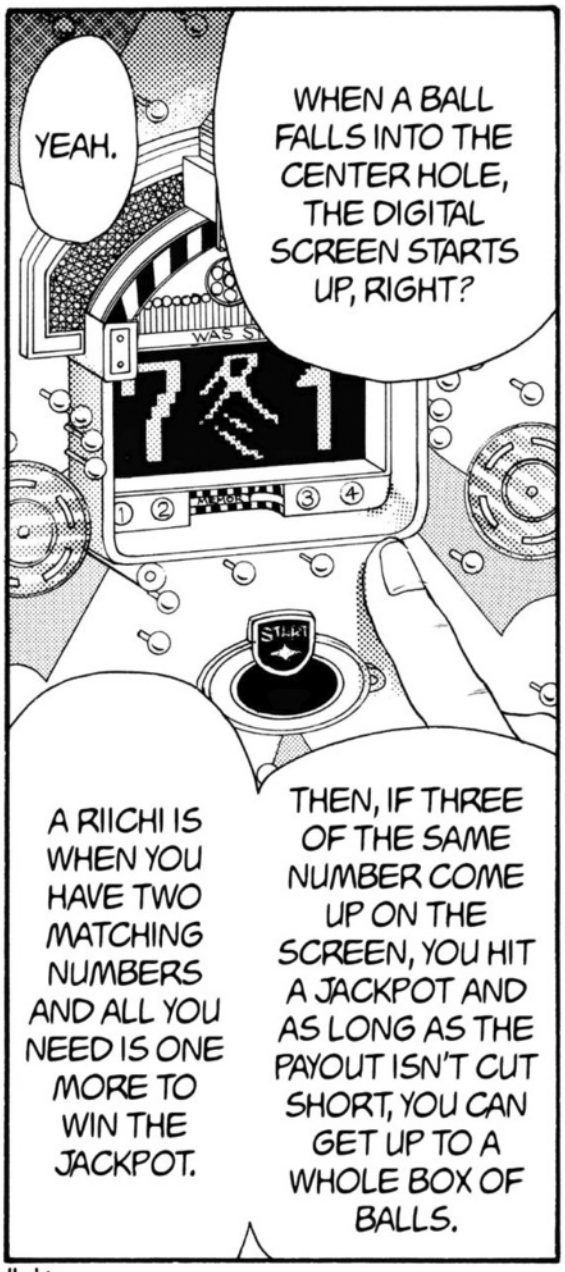
PING
PING
CHANK
CHANK

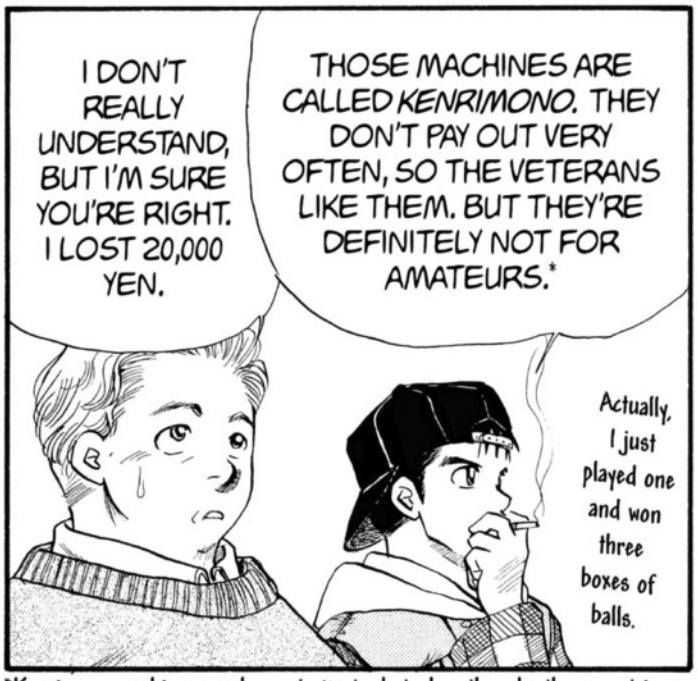

OH, THE GUY NEXT TO ME GOT A RIICHI.
PING
PING
PING


HUH?!
...ISN'T IT BETTER NOT TO RELEASE ANY MORE BALLS WHEN YOU'VE GOT A RIICHI?
CHANK
PING
PING


IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS, BUT...
YES?
UM...
PING
PING







*Kenrimono machines rarely pay jackpots, but when they do, the payout is usually big.

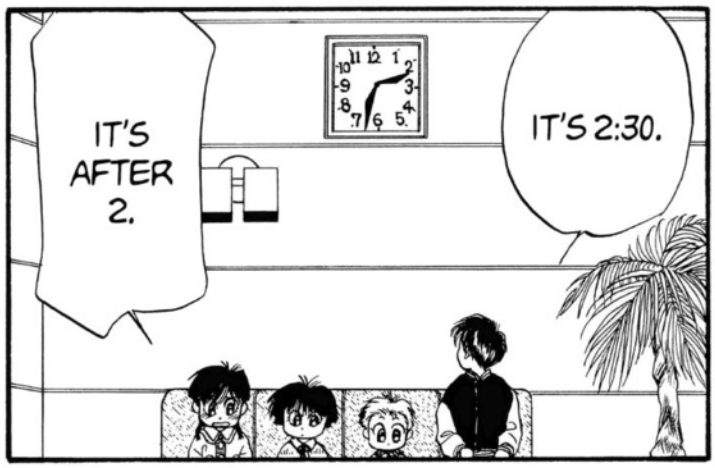
IF I DON'T STAY BUSY, I'LL WORRY MYSELF SICK!
I'D RATHER KEEP PLAYING !!

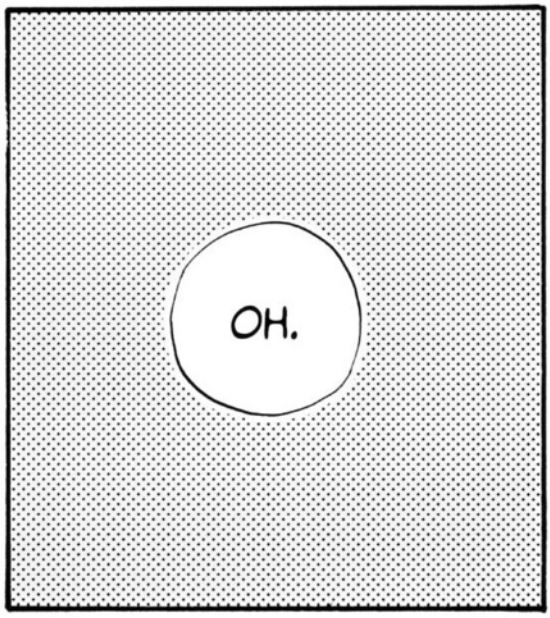
NO.

IF YOU KEEP LOSING MONEY LIKE THAT, YOU'RE GONNA BE IN A BAD MOOD WHEN YOUR FRIEND SHOWS UP. MAYBE YOU SHOULD QUIT.

LET ME SEE...
MISTER, WHAT TIME IS IT?!

...
CHANK
CHANK
CHANK


IT'S AFTER 2.
IT'S 2:30.

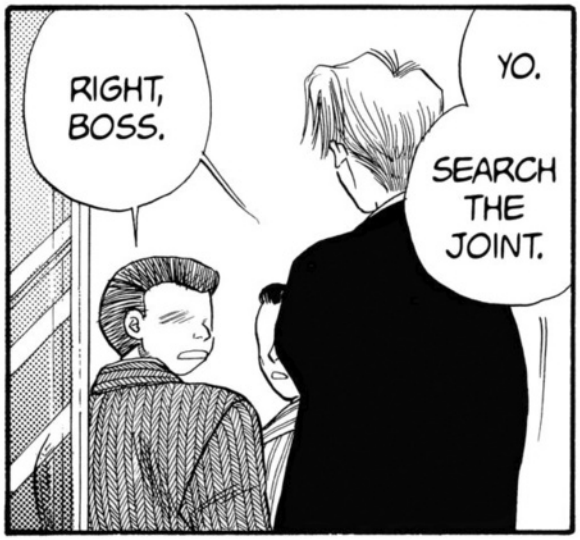

OH.

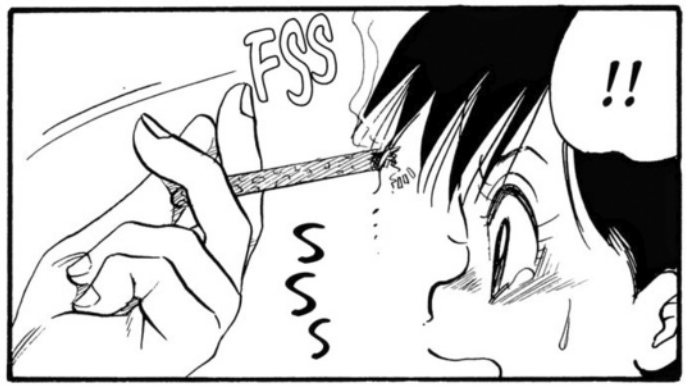
SIS...
WAAH!!
OH...
WAAAH... MOMMY DIDN'T COME!
...
SNIFF
SNIFF
WHAT'S WRONG?
BUH...
BUH...
MINORU, DON'T YOU START!!
WAAAH
OH...
SNIFF
SNIFF
WAAAH
WAAAH
MOMMY LIED...
SOB...
SOB...
DID SOMETHING HAPPEN TO YOUR MOTHER?
HIC
HIC

SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING TO BORROW THE MONEY FROM GRANDPA.
SHE TOLD US TO WAIT HERE WITH UNCLE MATSUDA.
HIC
HIC
HIC
M-MOMMY BORROWED MONEY FROM A LOAN SHARK FOR OUR SHOP...
...AND UNCLE MATSUDA GUARANTEED THE LOAN.
WOOSH!
BUT MOMMY ...
SNIFF
...HASN'T COME BACK.
SNIFF
...
FUYUMI!
CHINATSU!
TWITCH
?
KLAK

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU.

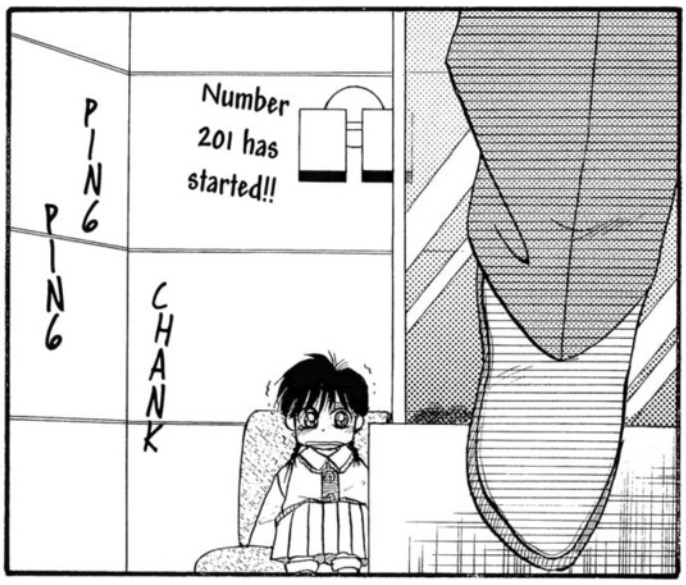
WHERE ARE YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR UNCLE MATSUDA?





...
I FEEL SORRY FOR THAT MATSUDA.

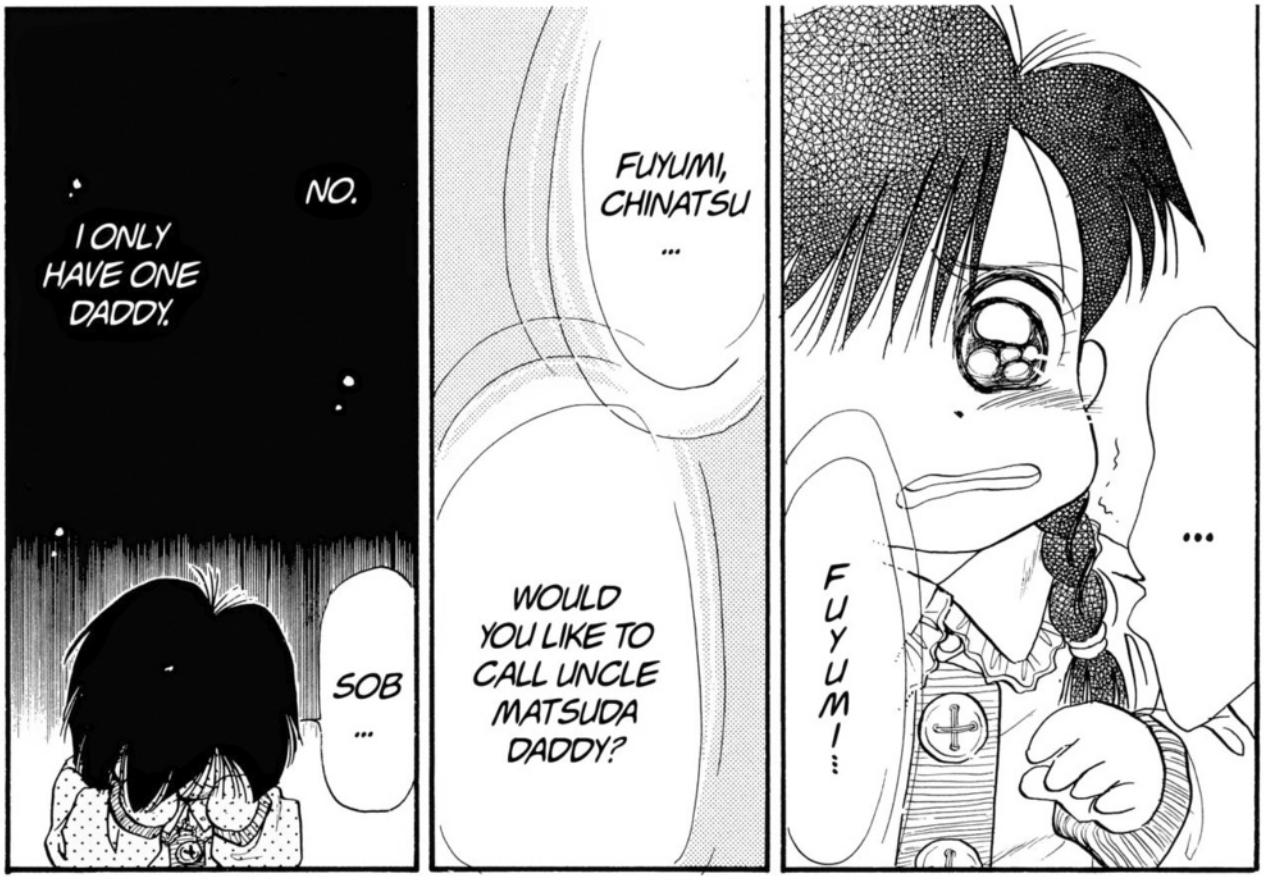
WHAT THE...?
IS HE A COLLECTOR FOR THE LOAN SHARK?


PING
PING
CHANK
Number 201 has started!!

UH... ARE YOU FUYUMI?
YES.
YOUR UNCLE MATSUDA'S IN HERE, ISN'T HE?
YES.

YOU'VE GOT TO RUN AND WARN HIM ABOUT THOSE GUYS!!

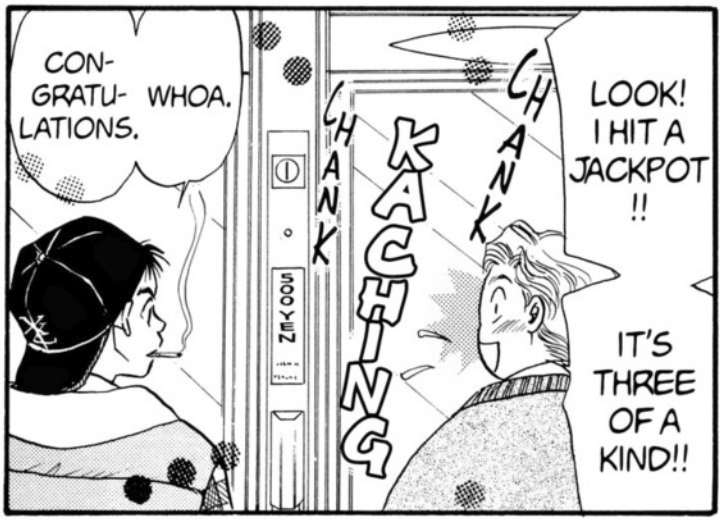
HE GUARANTEES A LOAN FOR THE WOMAN HE LOVES...
...THEN SHE RUNS OFF AND HER KIDS HATE HIM.
WHAT A FOOL.


FUYUMI!...
...
FUYUMI, CHINATSU ...
WOULD YOU LIKE TO CALL UNCLE MATSUDA DADDY?
NO.
I ONLY HAVE ONE DADDY.
SOB ...

WHAP
HUH?

PING
OH!

MATSUDA...
...IS THIS HOW YOU PLAN TO MAKE THAT 5 MILLION?

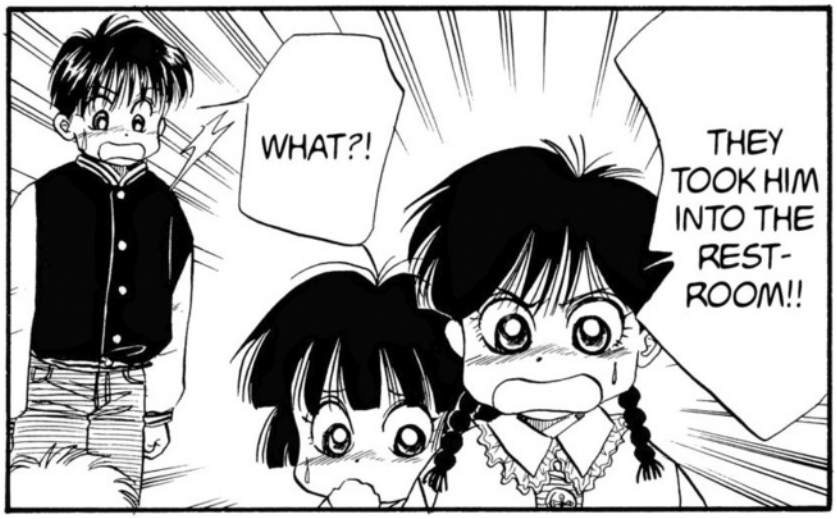

LOOK! I HIT A JACKPOT !!
CHANK
CHANK
KACHING
IT'S THREE OF A KIND!!
CON-GRATU-LATIONS.
WHOA.

JACKPOT
SHIP
NUMBER 64 HAS STARTED.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
FUUP
FUUP
FUUP
FUUP
HELP ME!
HUH?!
COME ON. LET'S GO.
AH!
AH!
PING
PING
AREN'T YOU GOING TO KEEP PLAYING?
HUH? SIR?
杉田
CHANK
!!
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
KRASH
CHANK
HE SAID TO PLAY HIS MACHINE FOR HIM.
I GUESS I HAVE NO CHOICE.
IS THAT TRUE?
杉田

MINORU ...
...WE'VE GOT TO FIND SEIICHI!!
YEAH.

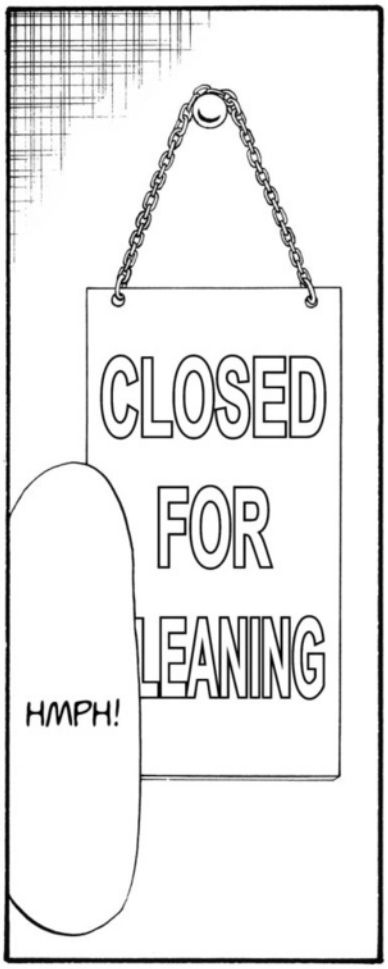
DID YOU FIND HIM?
HE JUST ...
... WENT INTO THE REST-ROOM.

t Minoru


THEY TOOK HIM INTO THE REST-ROOM!!
WHAT?!

WHAT NOW? GONNA SELL YOUR CONDO-MINIUM?
OR MAYBE DUMP THE BROAD?
...

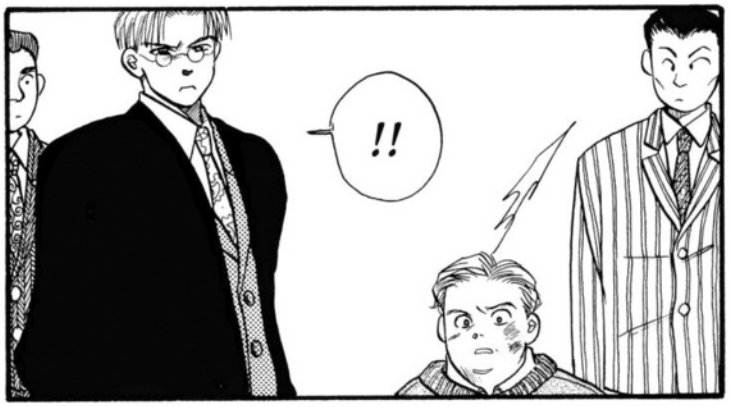
WHY'D YOU GUARANTEE A LOAN YOU KNEW YOU COULDN'T COVER?
IMAGINE HOW THE LENDER FEELS.


CLOSED FOR LEANING
HMPH!

ALL RIGHT. I'LL SELL MY CONDO.

C'MON, NOW. HOW CAN I HELP YOU IF YOU WON'T TALK TO ME?
RIGHT?
THE BOSS'LL BE MAD AT ME.
UGH!
TOMP

GOOD.
THAT'S THE RIGHT ANSWER.


!!

AND NEXT TIME, DON'T GET MIXED UP WITH BAD WOMEN.
SLAM

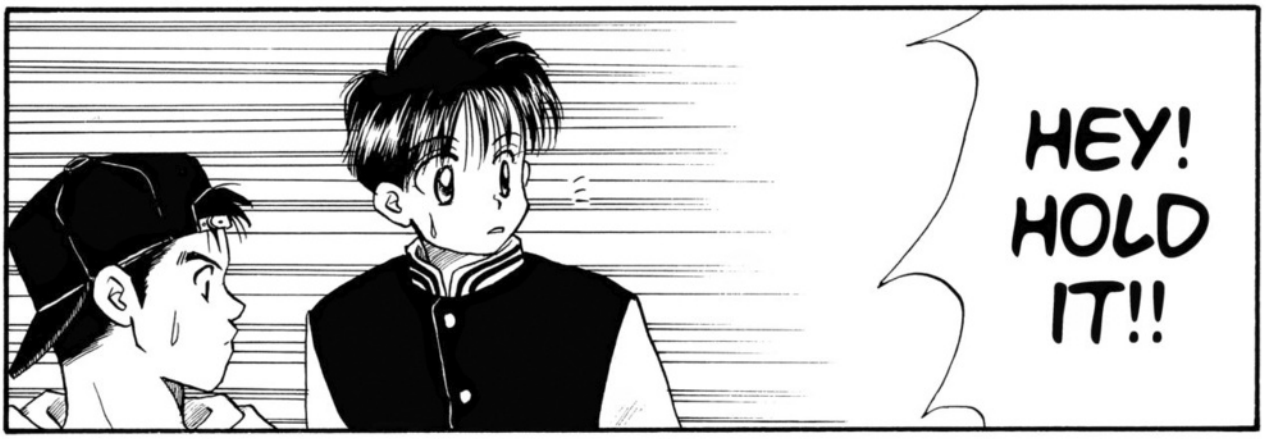
CHI-NATSU ...
FUYUMI ...

MY FATHER DISOWNED ME. I WON'T BEG HIM FOR A LOAN.
UNCLE MATSUDA, MOMMY'S COMING BACK!!
OUR MOMMY IS NOT A BAD WOMAN!!
WE'LL MEET AT 2 ON SATURDAY AT PACHINKO GRANDE.
PLEASE LOOK AFTER FUYUMI AND CHINATSU WHILE I'M GONE.
SPLASSH
STOP BEATING UP...
I PROMISE.
I'LL BE BACK.
KSEK
KSHHH
AAGH!
...OUR DADDY!!

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
AH!
PLEASE! YOU'VE GOT TO HELP HIM!!

HUH?

SEIICHI!

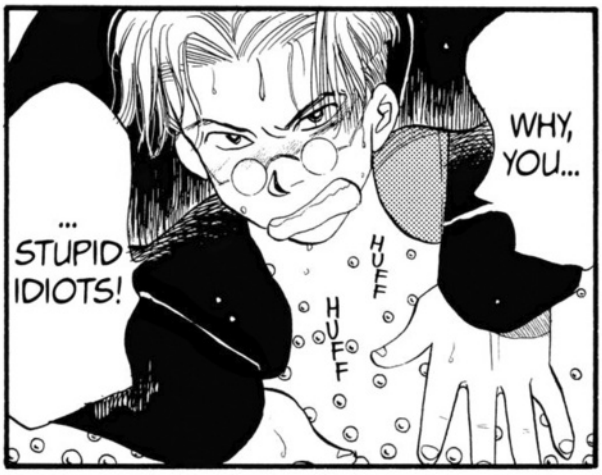

HEY! HOLD IT!!

THEY'RE THE BAD GUYS, RIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT, BUT...

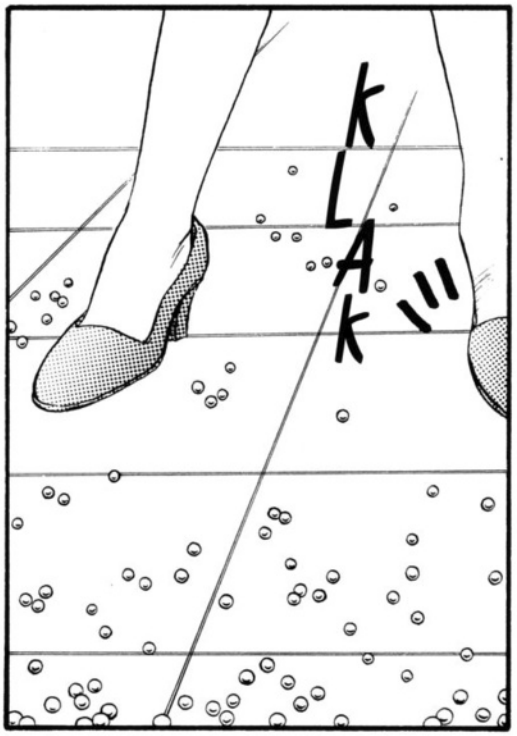
TMP TMP TMP TMP
WAAH!! MISTER !!

YIKES!
SWIP

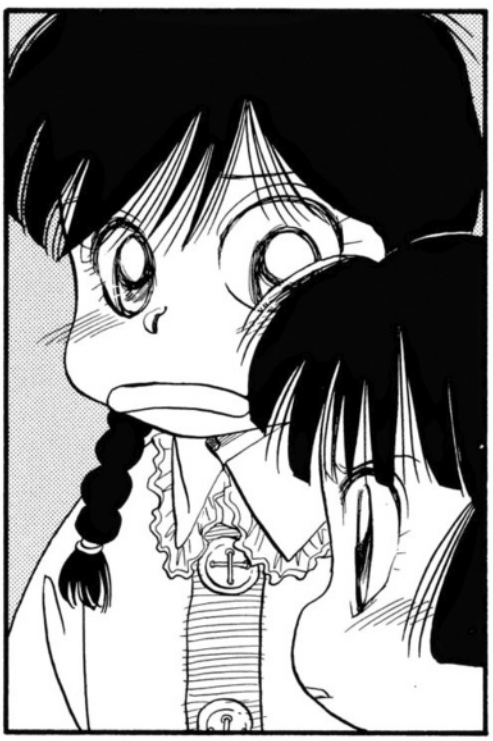
AND THE MAN BOWLS!!
CHECK OUT HIS MAGNIFICENT 180+ FORM!!
STRIKE!!
KLATTER


WHY, YOU...
... STUPID IDIOTS!
HUFF
HUFF

YOU'RE THE IDIOT.

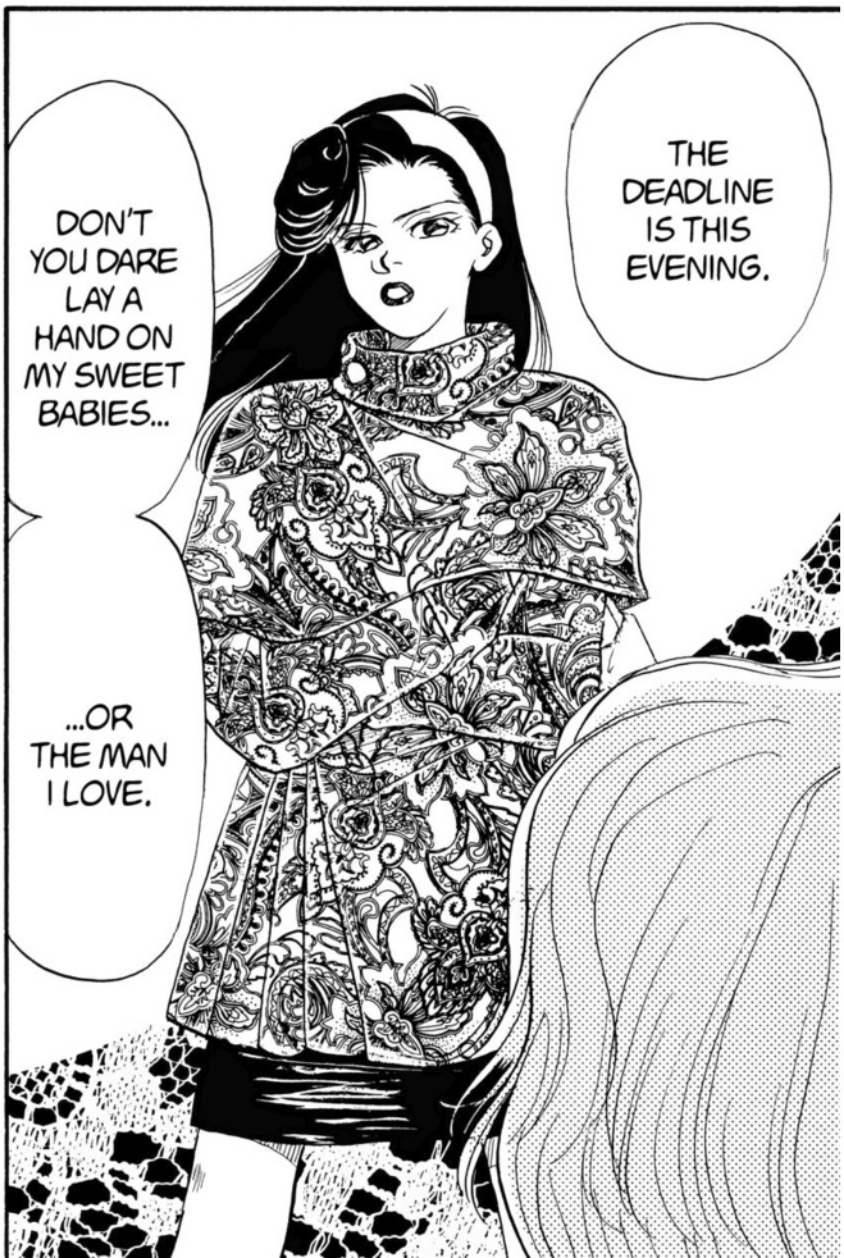

KLAK

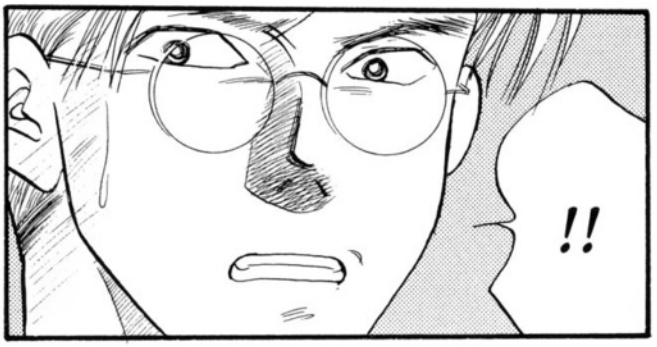
HUFF
HUFF
S-SET-SUKO ...



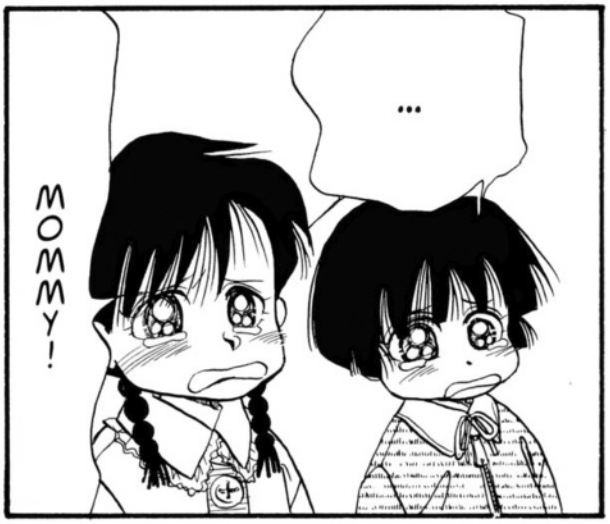
THAT'S ONE DIRTY RACKET YOU'RE IN.
YOU LEND THREE MILLION AND COLLECT FIVE.
SHUFF!

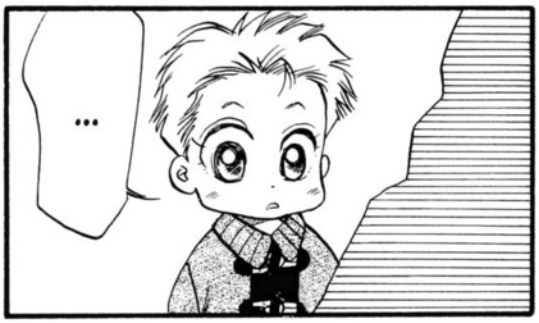
DID YOU ACTUALLY THINK...
...I'D GIVE MYSELF TO YOU IF I COULDN'T PAY IT BACK?

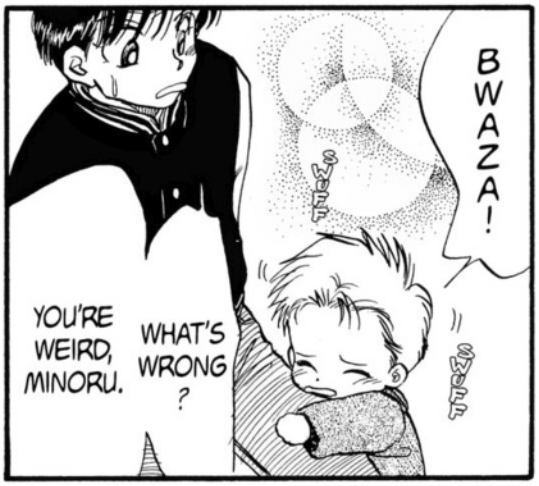

THE DEADLINE IS THIS EVENING.
DON'T YOU DARE LAY A HAND ON MY SWEET BABIES...
...OR THE MAN I LOVE.



▲ Minoru's down here somewhere.

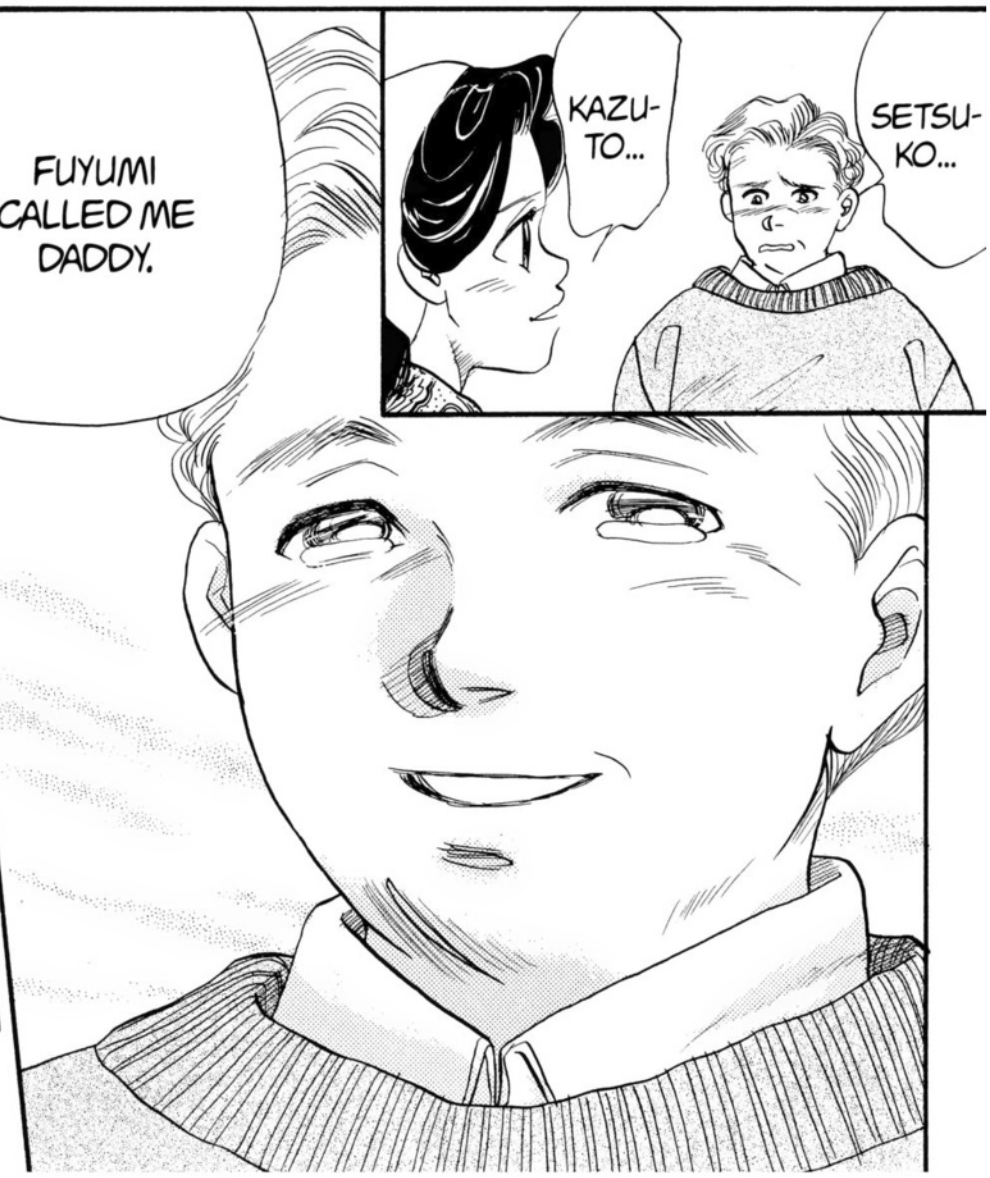



...


BWAZA!
SWUFF
SWUFF
YOU'RE WEIRD, MINORU.
WHAT'S WRONG?

SWUFF
I'M SO SORRY!
WAAH!! MOMMY ...
WERE YOU WORRIED?
SWUFF

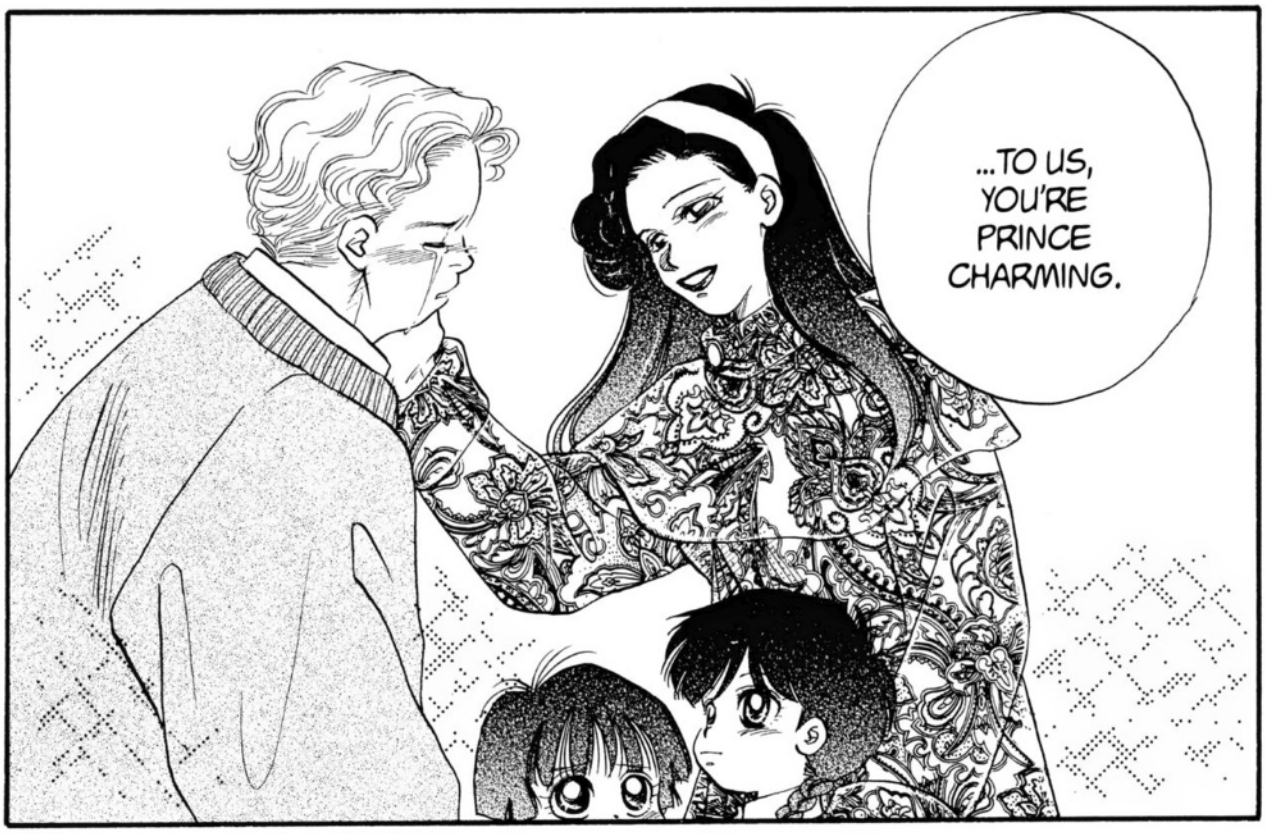
IS THAT OKAY?

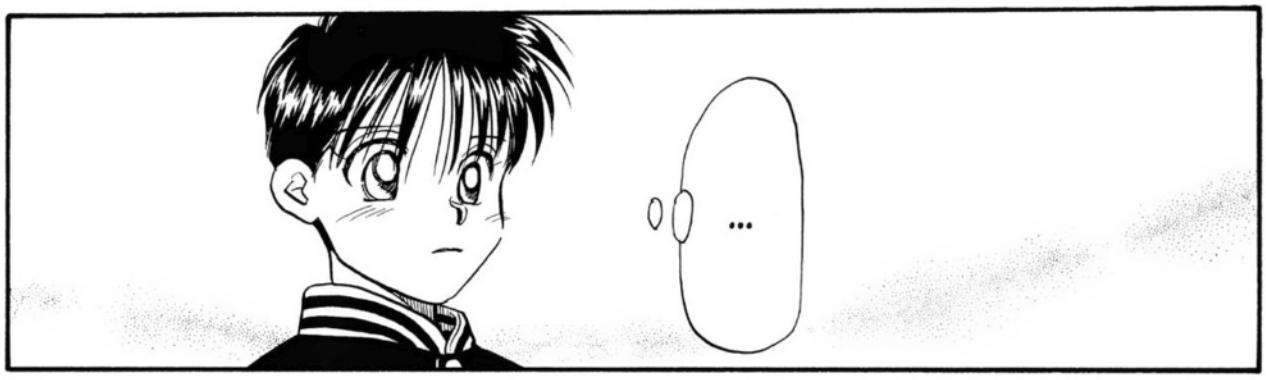

FUYUMI CALLED ME DADDY.
KAZUTO...
SETSUKO...

I DON'T KNOW IF I'LL BE A GOOD FATHER ...
...OR HUSBAND.
KAZUTO ...

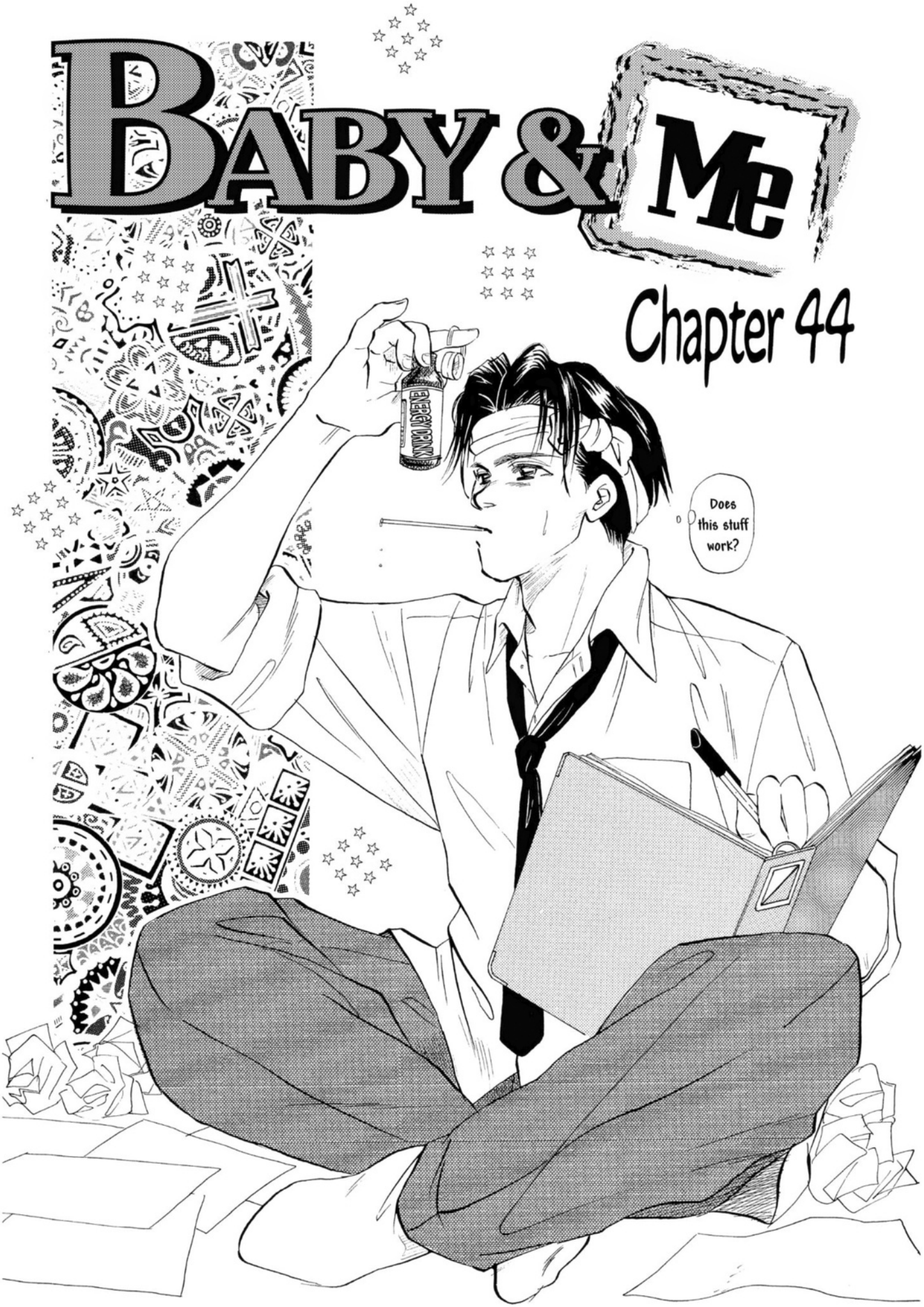
I DID A LOT OF THINKING TODAY.
I EVEN FORGOT TO EAT.
I'm not very brave, either.
OH. HE FORGOT TO FEED THE KIDS...

I'M... WELL...
I'M FAT...AND I'M NOT VERY EXCIT-ING.


...TO US, YOU'RE PRINCE CHARMING.


...

Chapter 43/The End

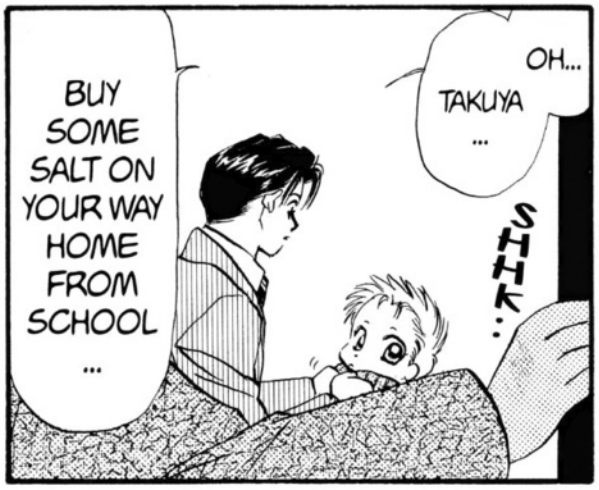

BABY & Me
Chapter 44
ENERGY DRINK
Does this stuff work?

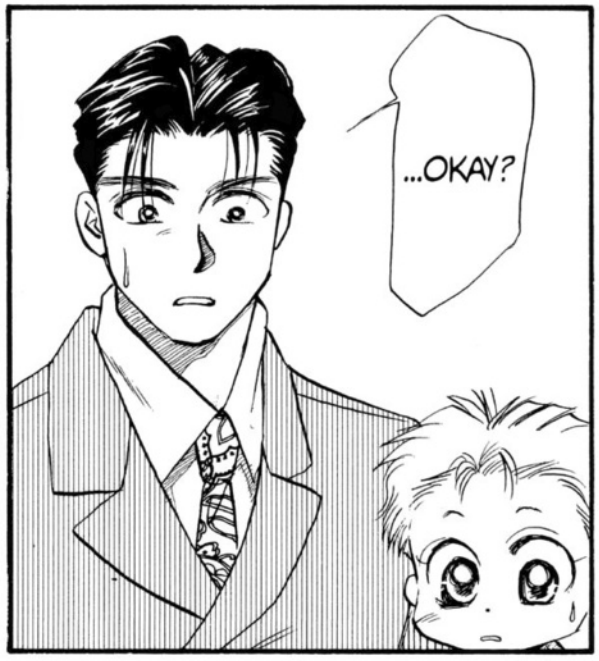
tmp
tmp
ONE DAY IN FEBRUARY ...

I'M SORE UNDER MY EARS.

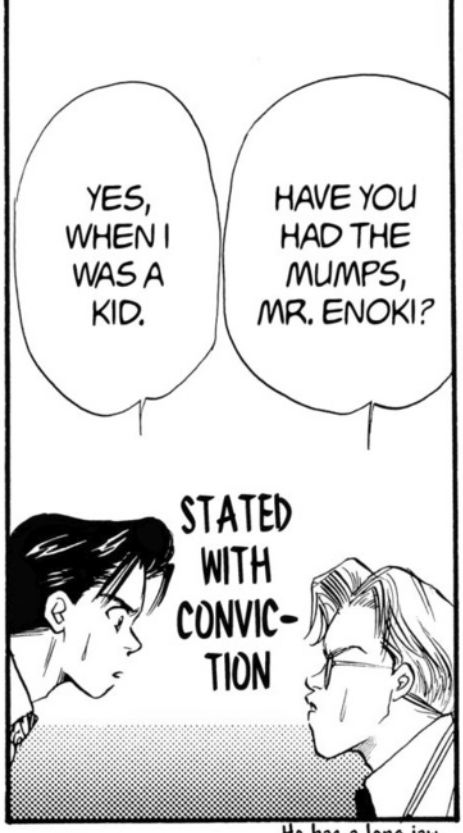
HUH?

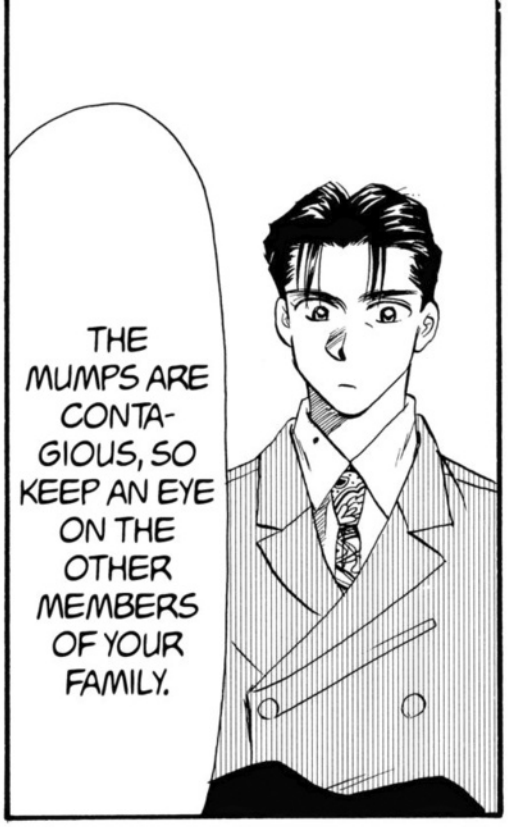
MY CHEEKS ...
...ARE SORE...
TAKUYA HAS A FAT FACE.
MY CHEEKS SUDDENLY SWELLED UP.


OH... TAKUYA ...
SHHK..
BUY SOME SALT ON YOUR WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL ...

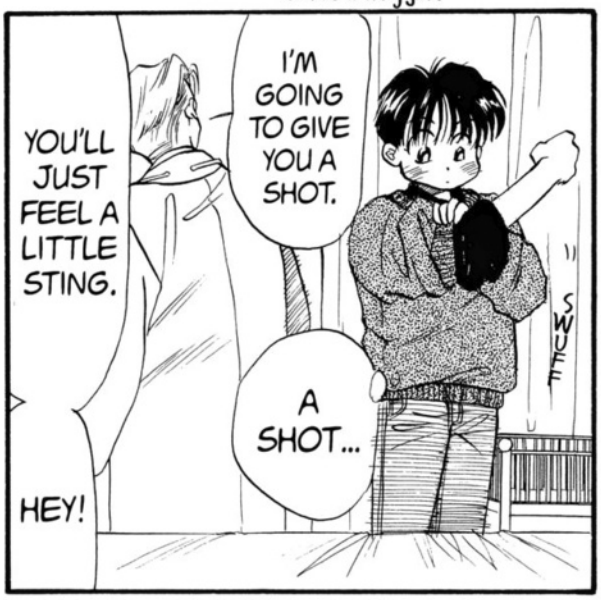

...OKAY?

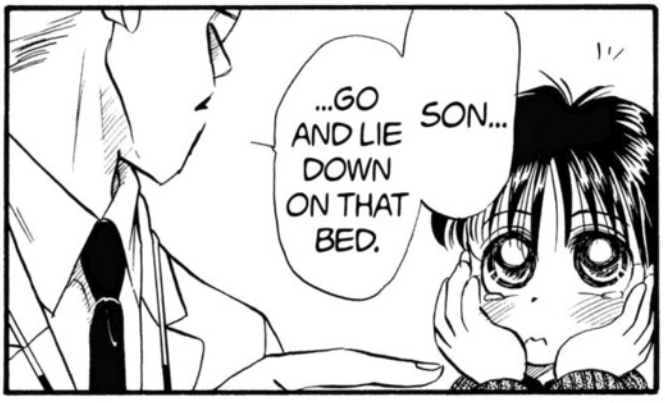
HMM...
NO DOUBT ABOUT IT.
THIS IS...
SNAP!
TACHIHARA CLINIC
INTERNAL MEDICINE
PSYCHIATRY
AM 9:30 ~ PM12:00
THE MUMPS, HUH?
HE'LL BE SORE FOR A FEW DAYS, SO GIVE HIM FOOD THAT'S EASY TO CHEW.
...EPIDEMIC PAROTITIS.
My face is so sore.
SON, YOU HAVE THE MUMPS.





He has a long jaw.





EVERY-THING'S GOING TO BE FINE.
JUST RELAX.

UH...
IT'LL FEEL A LITTLE COLD. I'M GOING TO SWAB IT WITH ALCOHOL.

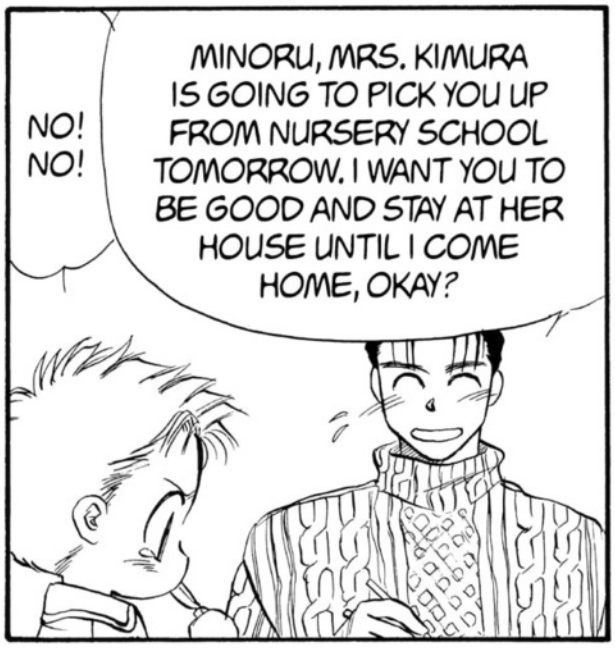
WHAT?
NOW LIE DOWN.

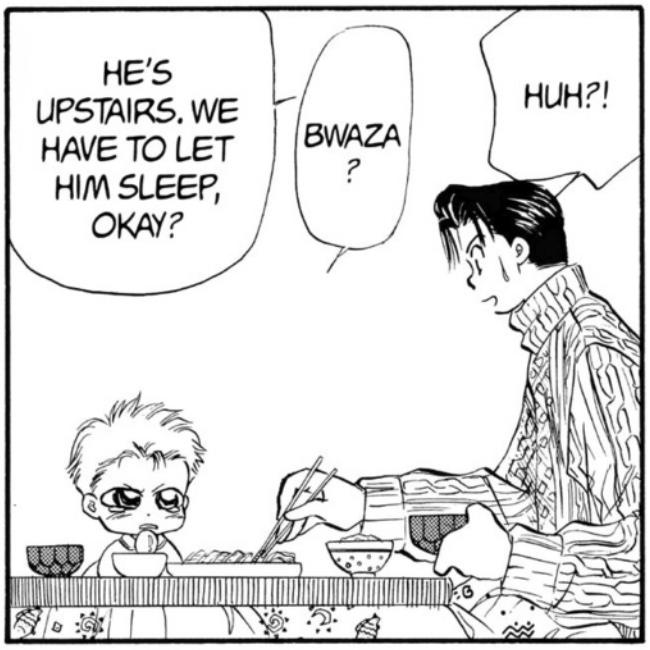
HE ENJOYS GIVING SHOTS A LITTLE TOO MUCH.
BE STRONG, TAKUYA!!
SHIK
OUCH !!

THAT NIGHT, I SLEPT IN MY ROOM FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A LONG TIME.
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO GET A SHOT IN THE RUMP AT MY AGE.

WHEH'S BWAZA ?

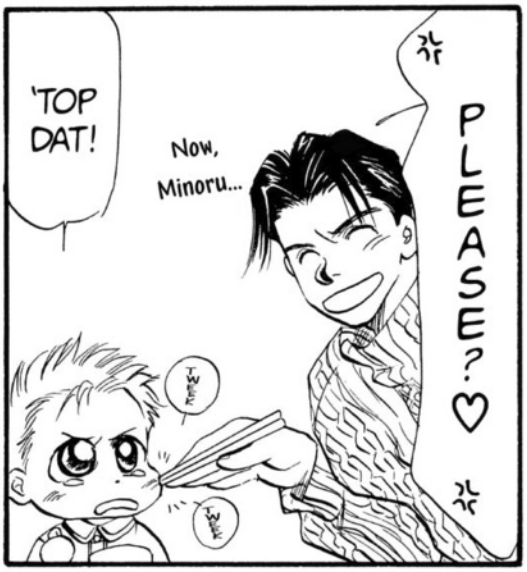
DADDY ...


NO! NO!
MINORU, MRS. KIMURA IS GOING TO PICK YOU UP FROM NURSERY SCHOOL TOMORROW. I WANT YOU TO BE GOOD AND STAY AT HER HOUSE UNTIL I COME HOME, OKAY?

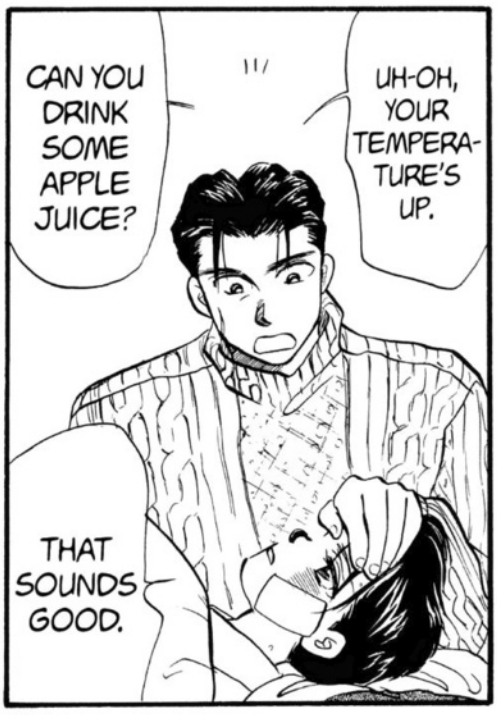

HE'S UPSTAIRS. WE HAVE TO LET HIM SLEEP, OKAY?
BWAZA ?
HUH?!

HOW ARE YOU FEELING, TAKUYA?

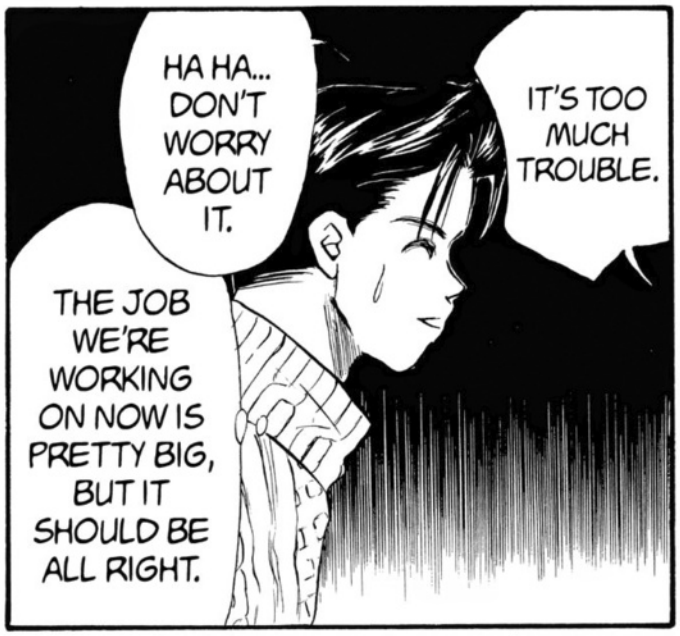
KLAK...


'TOP DAT!
Now, Minoru...
PLEASE?♡

TAKUYA, I CAN COME CHECK ON YOU AT LUNCHTIME. WILL YOU BE ALL RIGHT BY YOURSELF?

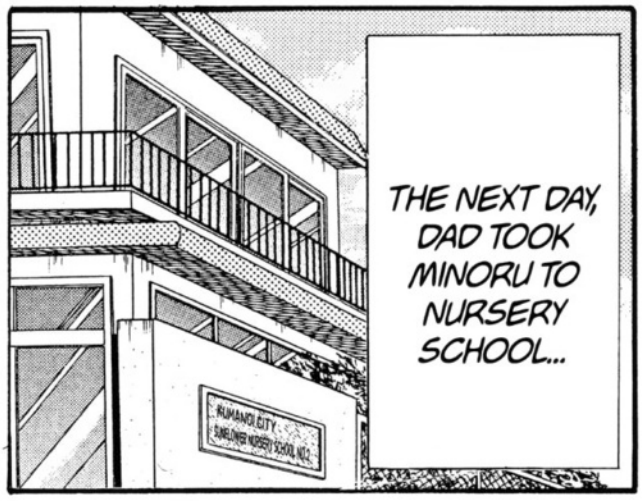

CAN YOU DRINK SOME APPLE JUICE?
UH-OH, YOUR TEMPERA-TURE'S UP.
THAT SOUNDS GOOD.

MY GLANDS ARE REALLY SORE.
AND MY THROAT HURTS TOO.
WEEZ
WEEZ


HA HA... DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
IT'S TOO MUCH TROUBLE.
THE JOB WE'RE WORKING ON NOW IS PRETTY BIG, BUT IT SHOULD BE ALL RIGHT.

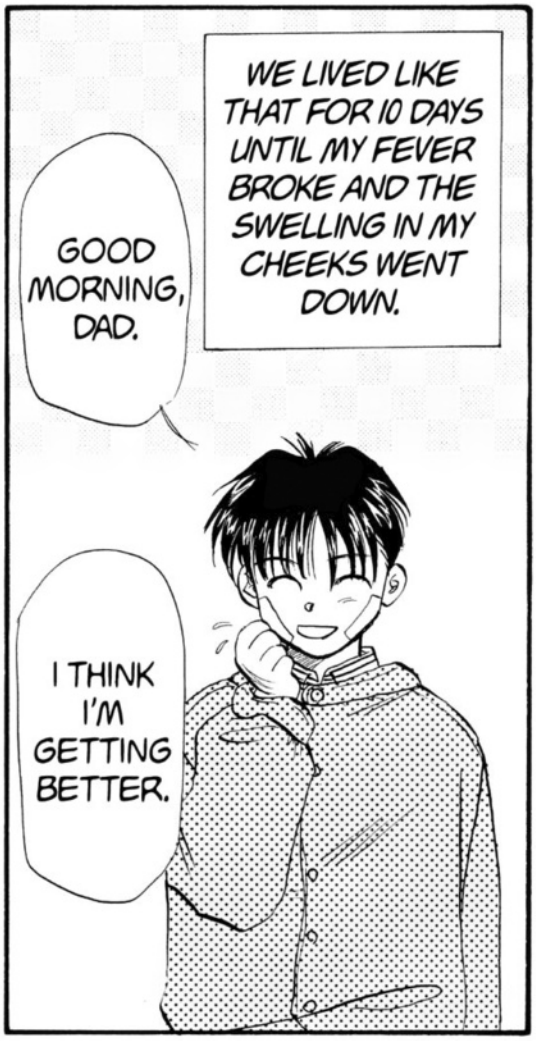
I'LL COME HOME AS EARLY AS I CAN, BUT IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, BE SURE TO CALL ME.
I'LL BE FINE.
WEEZ
WEEZ
I'LL BE ALL RIGHT. YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHECK ON ME.

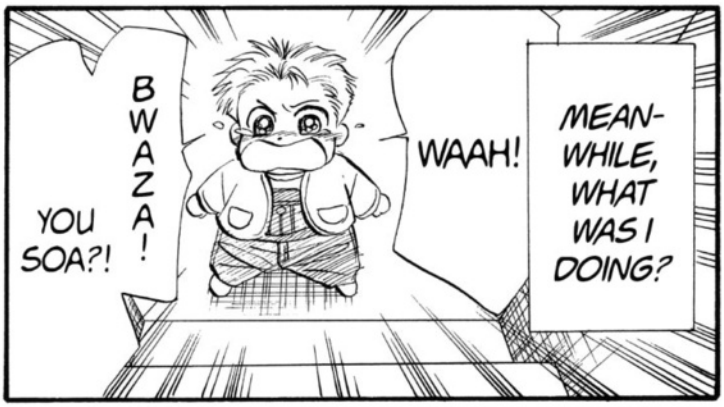
...THEN WENT BACK TO WORK.
Here's some rice soup.
...CAME HOME AT LUNCH-TIME TO CHECK ON ME...


THE NEXT DAY, DAD TOOK MINORU TO NURSERY SCHOOL...
KUMANO CITY
SUNFLOWER NURSERY SCHOOL NO.2

...PUT MINORU TO BED, THEN DID HIS OFFICE WORK LATE INTO THE NIGHT.
...COOKED DINNER, DID THE CLEANING AND THE LAUNDRY...
Apply this information ...
...to the database...
Mumble mumble

This is hard on you, Harumi, isn't it?
Ha ha...
THAT NIGHT, HE FINISHED WORK EARLY...
WORN OUT
I'm so sorry.
I'll have to ask for your help again tomorrow.
...PICKED UP MINORU, SHOPPING BAG IN HAND...
WAAH
WAAH


WE LIVED LIKE THAT FOR 10 DAYS UNTIL MY FEVER BROKE AND THE SWELLING IN MY CHEEKS WENT DOWN.
GOOD MORNING, DAD.
I THINK I'M GETTING BETTER.


MEAN-WHILE, WHAT WAS I DOING?
WAAH!
BWAZA!
YOU SOA?!

I HAD A FEVER AND MY CHEEKS WERE THROBBING. THE SOUND OF MINORU WAILING DOWNSTAIRS...
...REALLY GOT TO ME.
UNH
UNH
BWAAAH!
BWAZA!

Author's Note 7

4. Do a rough draft. The one below was drawn on B5 straw paper.

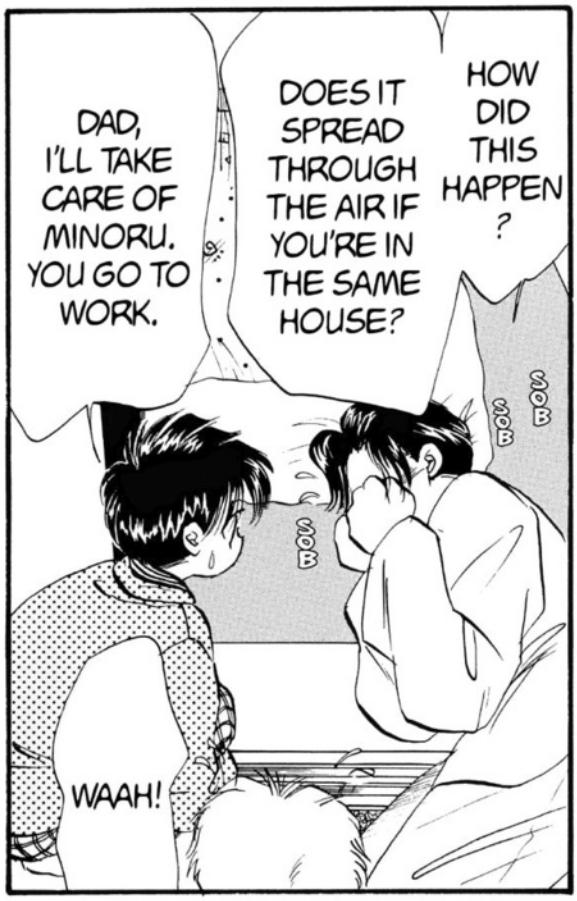
5. Draw everything on manuscript paper. I hate this part of my job.

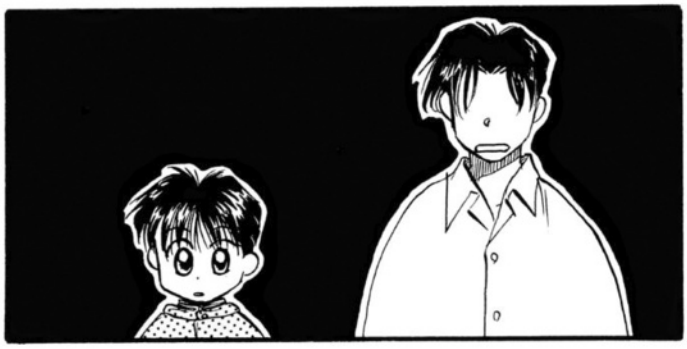
6. Ink it with pens. Add light and shadow.
7. Paste in the background tone and check it one last time. Now it's done.♡

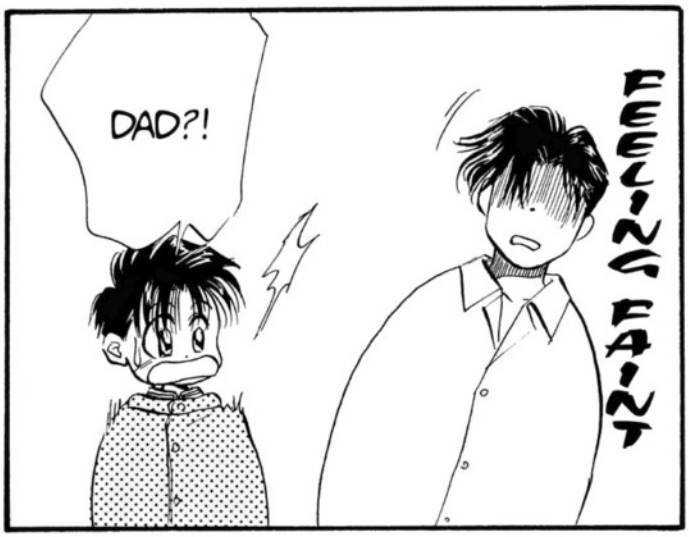
The end. See you in volume 9!

OWWIE...
MINORU'S FACE IS FAT
SOB
SOB

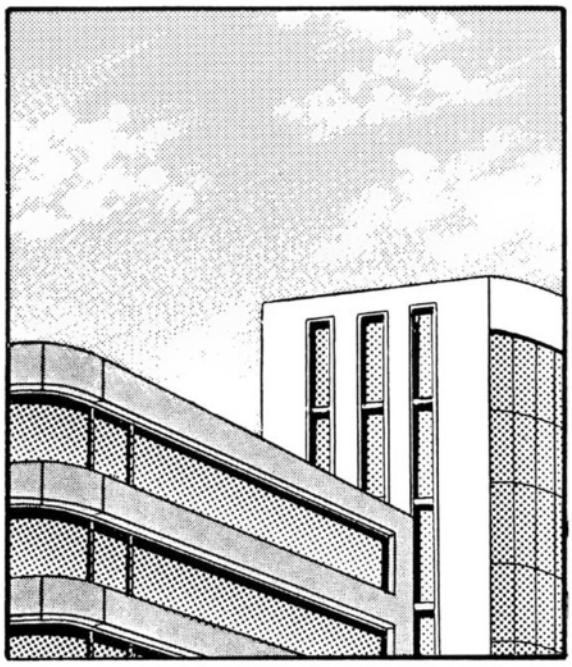
WAAH!
M-MINORU?


DAD, I'LL TAKE CARE OF MINORU. YOU GO TO WORK.
DOES IT SPREAD THROUGH THE AIR IF YOU'RE IN THE SAME HOUSE?
HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?
SOB
SOB
SOB
WAAH!




DAD?!
FEELING FAINT

YOU'RE TAKING A FEW DAYS OFF?!
WHAT?!



ABOUT 10 DAYS! IS THAT ALL?
I SEE.

HOW MANY DAYS DO YOU INTEND TO TAKE OFF?
ABOUT 10.
WELL?

MY SON IS SICK.
THAT'S RIGHT.
BUT HAVEN'T YOU BEEN TAKING TIME OFF AT LUNCHTIME BECAUSE YOUR SON WAS SICK?
THAT WAS MY OLDER SON. NOW IT'S THE LITTLE ONE.

WHAT'S SO FUNNY?
HA HA HA
HA HA HA HA

YOU MEAN I CAN'T?
IT'S NOT FUNNY! HOW CAN A SYSTEMS ENGINEER TAKE SO MUCH TIME OFF?!

SOME-TIMES IT'S NOT EASY HAVING KIDS.
COULDN'T THEY HAVE GOTTEN SICK AT THE SAME TIME?

SIGH ...

I'M SORRY, YUKAKO.
SWAK
IDIOT.
KREEK...

IT'S NOT A MATTER OF YOU CATCHING IT...

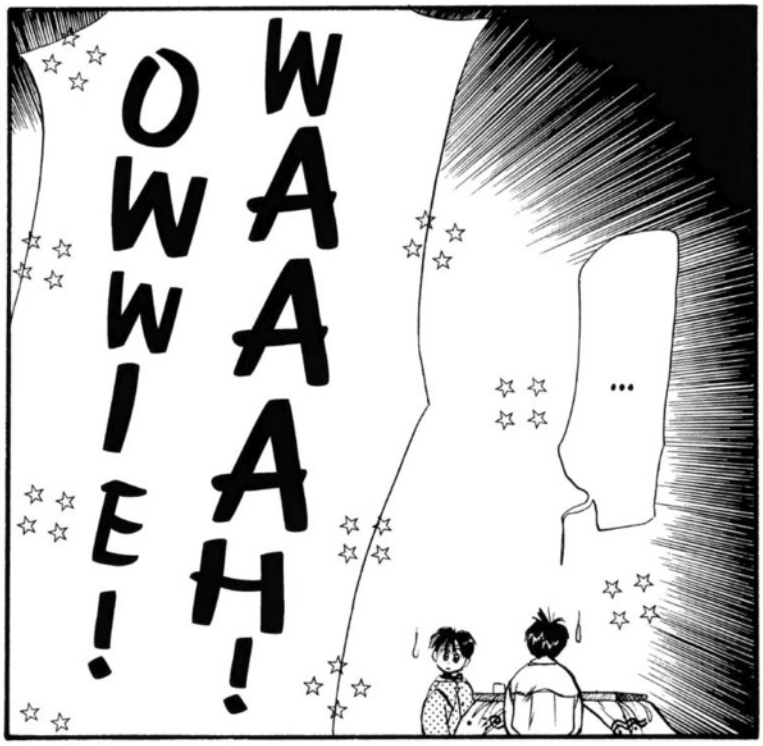
YES, AND UNTIL MINORU GETS WELL.
BUT I JUST GOT OVER IT. I CAN'T CATCH IT AGAIN, CAN I?

WHAT?
I HAVE TO SLEEP UPSTAIRS AGAIN TONIGHT?

SOB
SOB

WAAH!
WHAT I MEAN IS...

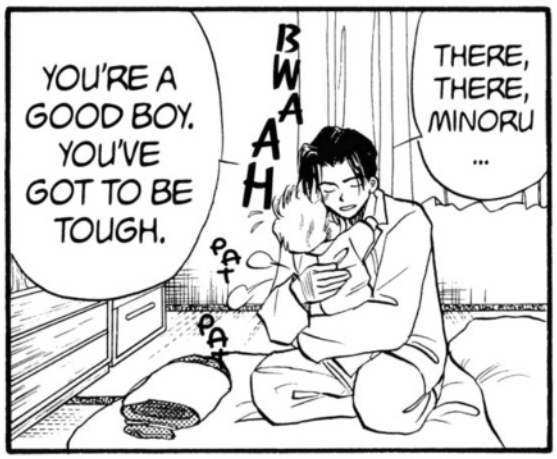
MINORU, I'LL CHANGE YOUR COMPRESS, OKAY?
IT'LL FEEL NICE AND COOL.
HIC
HIC


WAAAAH!
OWWIE!
...

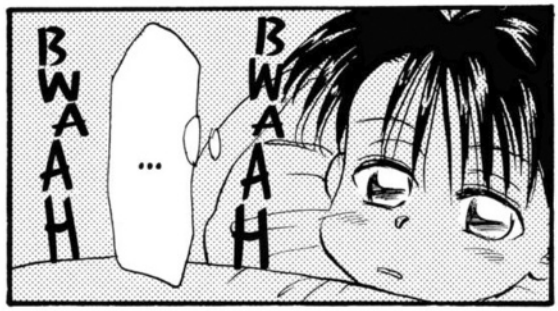
THAT NIGHT ...

DAD HAS WORK TOMORROW.
BUT...

IF HE CRIES LIKE THIS ALL NIGHT, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SLEEP, WILL YOU?
AND YOU'VE GOT SCHOOL TOMOR-ROW.
SOB

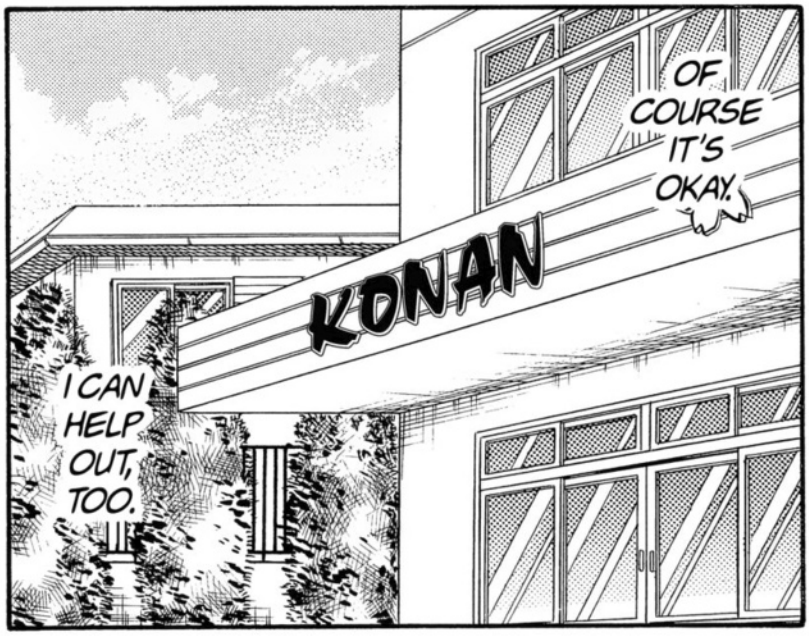

YOU'RE A GOOD BOY. YOU'VE GOT TO BE TOUGH.
BWAAH
THERE, THERE, MINORU ...
PAT PAT

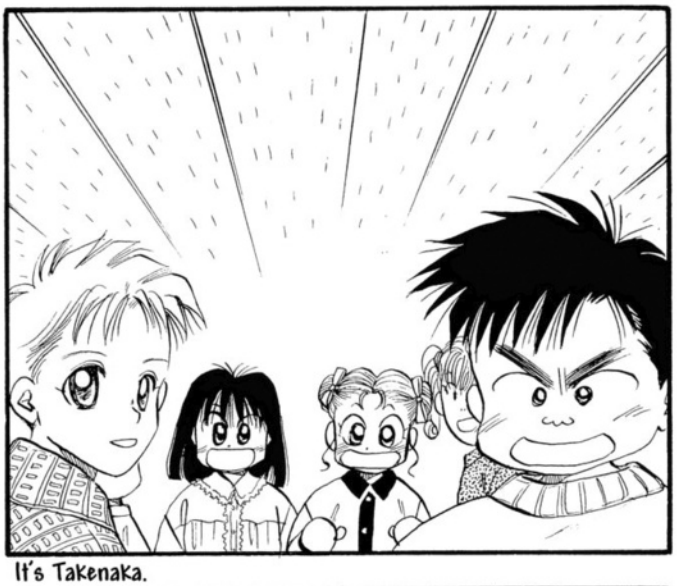
...
BLUGH


BWAAH
...
BWAAH

BWAHAAAAAH
THE SWELLING IN MINORU'S CHEEKS GOT WORSE AND HIS FEVER WENT UP.
HE CRIED ALL NIGHT LONG.

I'M UPSTAIRS, BUT I STILL CAN'T SLEEP...
WHAT A VOICE HE'S GOT.
BWAAAH
BWAAAH
CHEEP
CHEEP
DAZED...
DAZED...
WHEN YOU GET HOME FROM SCHOOL, I'LL GO TO WORK. CAN YOU LOOK AFTER MINORU?
YEAH?
TAKUYA ...
DAZED
HUH ?!
IN THE EVE-NING?
I NEED TO CATCH UP AT WORK.
I'LL BE HOME LATE, OKAY?





It's Takenaka.

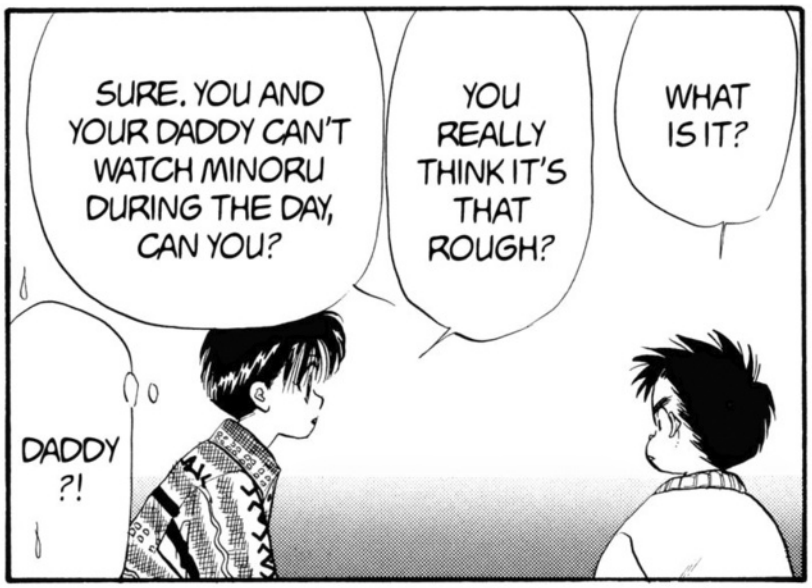
MY WIGGLE DANCE IS JUST AS GOOD. ♡
I CAN'T START MY DAY WITH-OUT IT.
THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THE SIGHT OF TAKUYA'S SMILE IN THE MORNING.
OHH ...
ENTRANCED...

OH.
GOOD MORN-ING.
SPARKLE SPARKLE

WHOA.
YEAH.
THAT'S ROUGH.

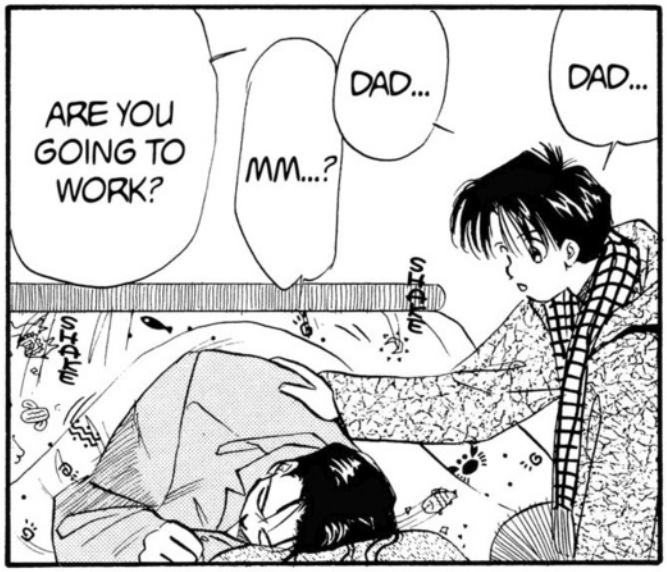
WHAT ?!
NOW MINORU HAS THE MUMPS?

CATCHING UP ON MY SCHOOLWORK'S GONNA BE TOUGH.
TAKUYA, SAVE ME!
BONK
BONK
BONK
BONK
BONK


SURE. YOU AND YOUR DADDY CAN'T WATCH MINORU DURING THE DAY, CAN YOU?
YOU REALLY THINK IT'S THAT ROUGH?
WHAT IS IT?
DADDY ?!

DAD! MINORU!
I'M HOME!
YEAH, I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
TAKUYA, YOU'RE ACTING STRANGE.
HE'S SLEEPING SO PEACEFULLY.
Takuya,
Please wake me up when you get home. I have to go to the office.
Dad

IT'S 3:30.
MM... WHAT TIME IS IT?
SHUMP
SHUMP

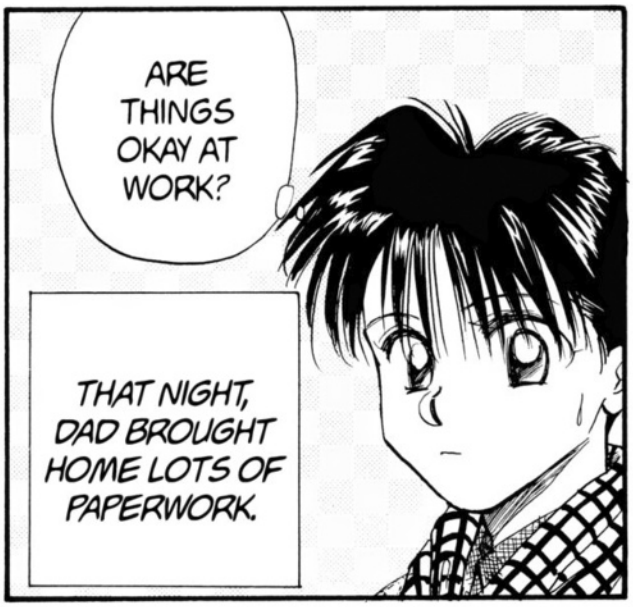

ARE YOU GOING TO WORK?
MM...?
DAD...
DAD...
SHAKE
SHAKE

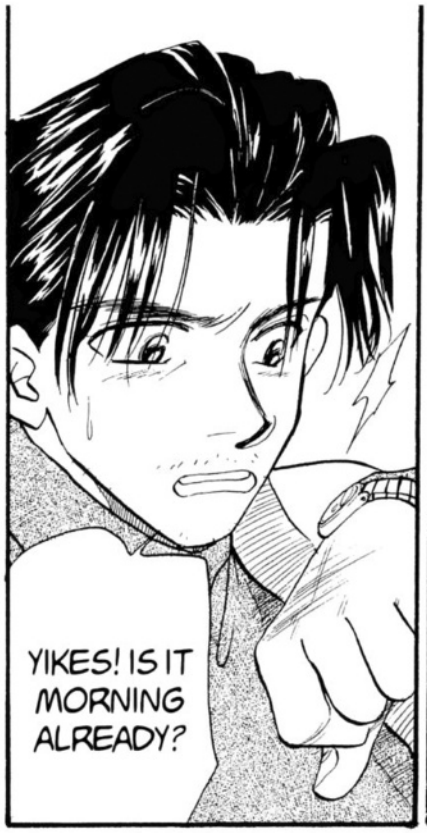
SWAY
SWAY
HE'S SO TIRED...

MINORU FINALLY FELL ASLEEP A WHILE AGO, SO TRY TO BE QUIET.
I'D BETTER GO TO THE OFFICE.
OKAY.

DAZED...

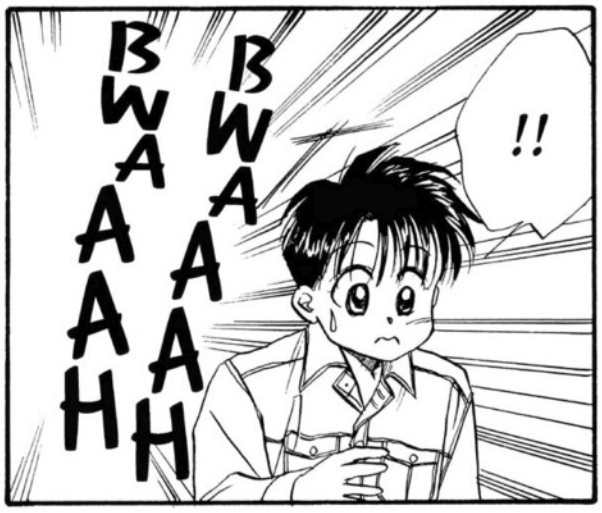
...HE WAS STILL WORKING.
THE NEXT MORNING...
CHEEP
CHEEP
BEEPBEEP

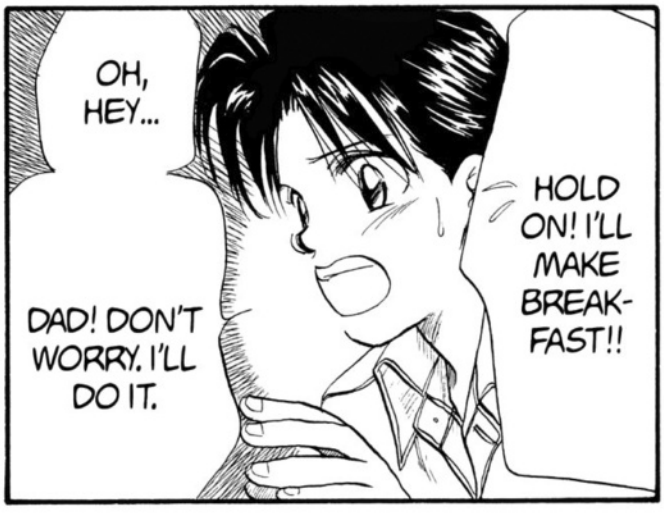

ARE THINGS OKAY AT WORK?
THAT NIGHT, DAD BROUGHT HOME LOTS OF PAPERWORK.


YIKES! IS IT MORNING ALREADY?

HUH?
GOOD MORNING, DAD.

...


!!
BWAAAAH
BWAAAAH


HOLD ON! I'LL MAKE BREAKFAST!!
OH, HEY...
DAD! DON'T WORRY. I'LL DO IT.

WAH! BWAZA...
SOB
SOB

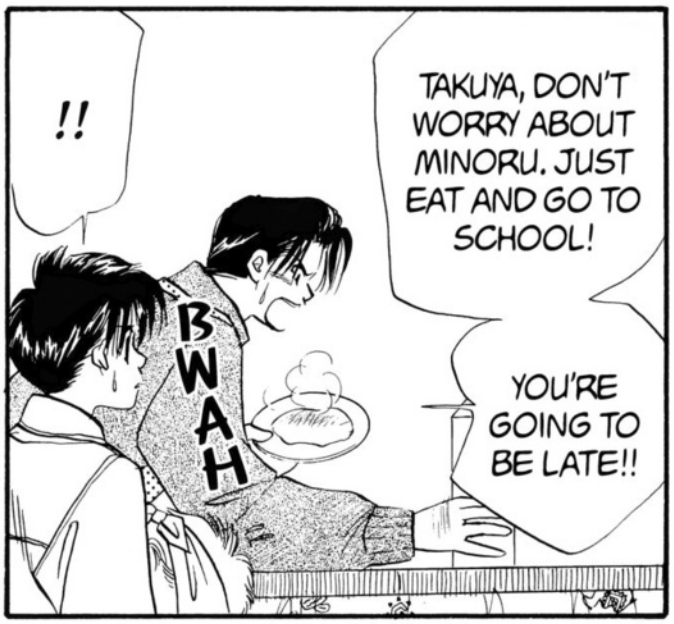
OH NO...
MINORU...
OWWIE!

THUMP

...
THKB
THKB
THKB
THKB
BWAAH
OWWIE!
SSSS
SSSS

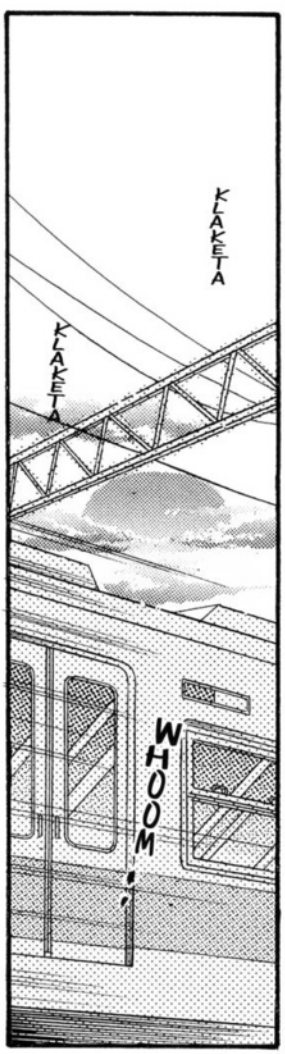
WHOA! HIS FACE LOOKS LIKE A BALLOON. AND HE HAS A FEVER.
MINORU, THE PAIN WILL GET BETTER SOON. HANG ON A LITTLE LONGER, OKAY?
WAAH
WAAH
OWWIE ...

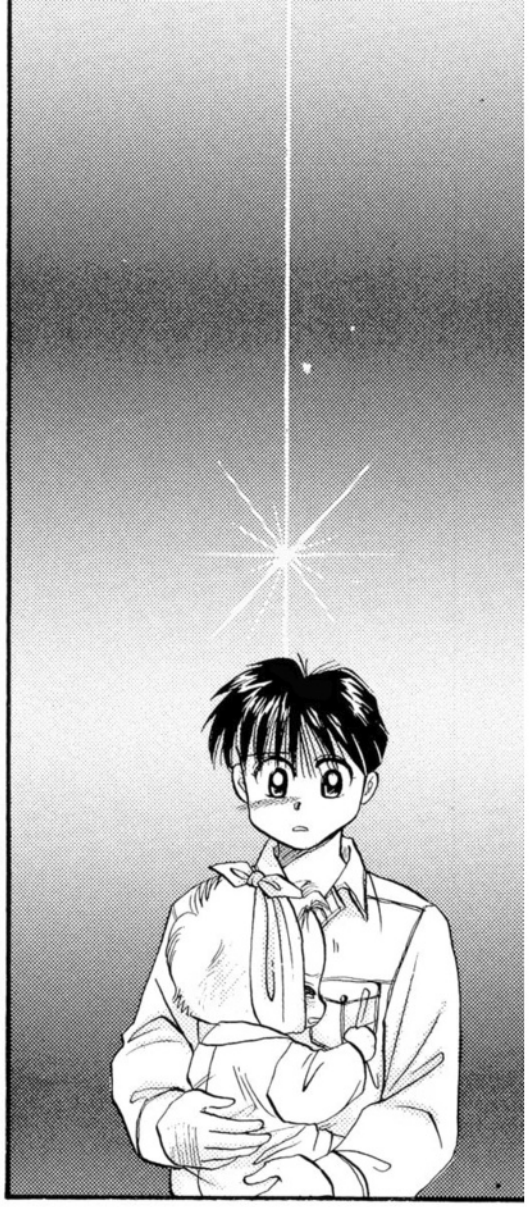
...THAT YOU REALIZE HOW IMPORTANT A MOTHER IS.
FATHERS ARE JUST...


!!
TAKUYA, DON'T WORRY ABOUT MINORU. JUST EAT AND GO TO SCHOOL!
BWAH
YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE!!

IT'S TIMES LIKE THESE...
DAD?

KLAKETA
KLAKETA
NOD
NOD

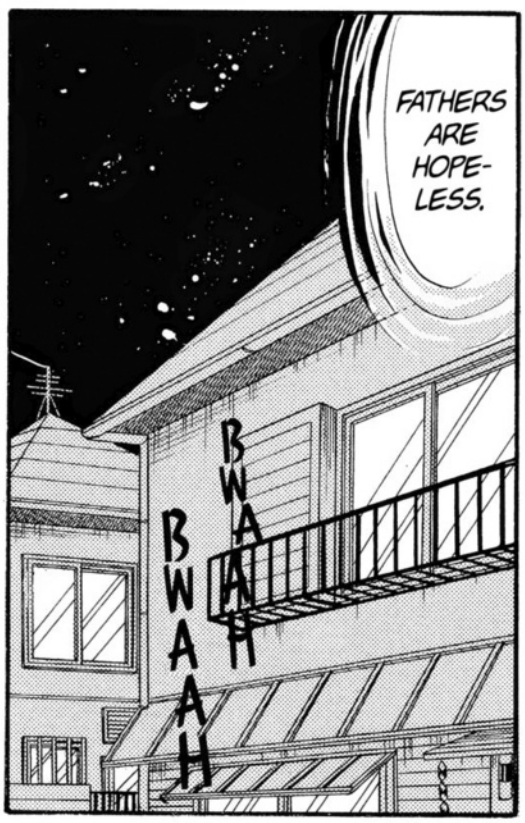

KLAKETA
KLAKETA
WHOOM



I'M SO SLEEPY ...
I WONDER IF I CAN KEEP THIS UP.
I'M SO TIRED, I FEEL LIKE THROWING UP...
NOD...

YES, YES...
WHAT'S WRONG, MINORU?
BWAAAH
BWAAAH

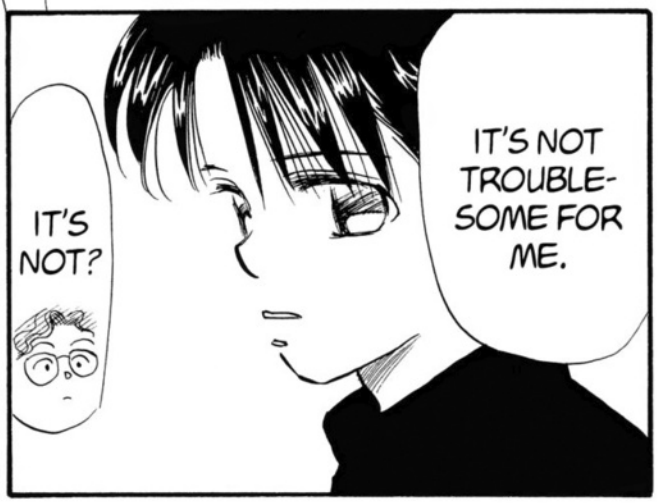
...
BWAAAAAH


FATHERS ARE HOPE-LESS.
BWAAAH
BWAAAH

I DON'T WANT TAKUYA AND MINORU ...
...TO SUFFER BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE A MOTHER.
...GO AWAY...
OWWIE, OWWIE...
COLD PACK
SNIFF
Ow...
SNIFF
HIC
OW...
COLD PACK
!
HIC
HIC
OW...
SOB
HIC
HIC
YUKAKO ...
OWWIE, OWWIE...
...GO AWAY...
NOW I'M CRYING FOR A MOTHER, TOO.
WHAT ?!
YACK
STAFF ROOM
YACK

YOU WANT TO...
...LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY?
NO, UM...
MY LITTLE BROTHER CAUGHT WHAT I HAD AND SOMEBODY NEEDS TO LOOK AFTER HIM.
OH, I SEE.
THAT'S TROUBLE-SOME, ISN'T IT?
YACK
YACK
THAT'S RIGHT.
ARE YOU FEELING SICK AGAIN?

SWOOSH
I'M HOME!


IT'S NOT TROUBLE-SOME FOR ME.
IT'S NOT?

YOUR TEACHER CALLED ME A WHILE AGO.
HE SAID YOU WERE LEAVING SCHOOL EARLY.

KLAK :
TAKUYA ...

SIGH!

YOU'LL BE GOING TO THE OFFICE TONIGHT, RIGHT?
YOU SHOULD SLEEP 'TIL THEN. I'LL TAKE CARE OF MINORU.

YEAH.
DAD, YOU NEED TO GET SOME REST.

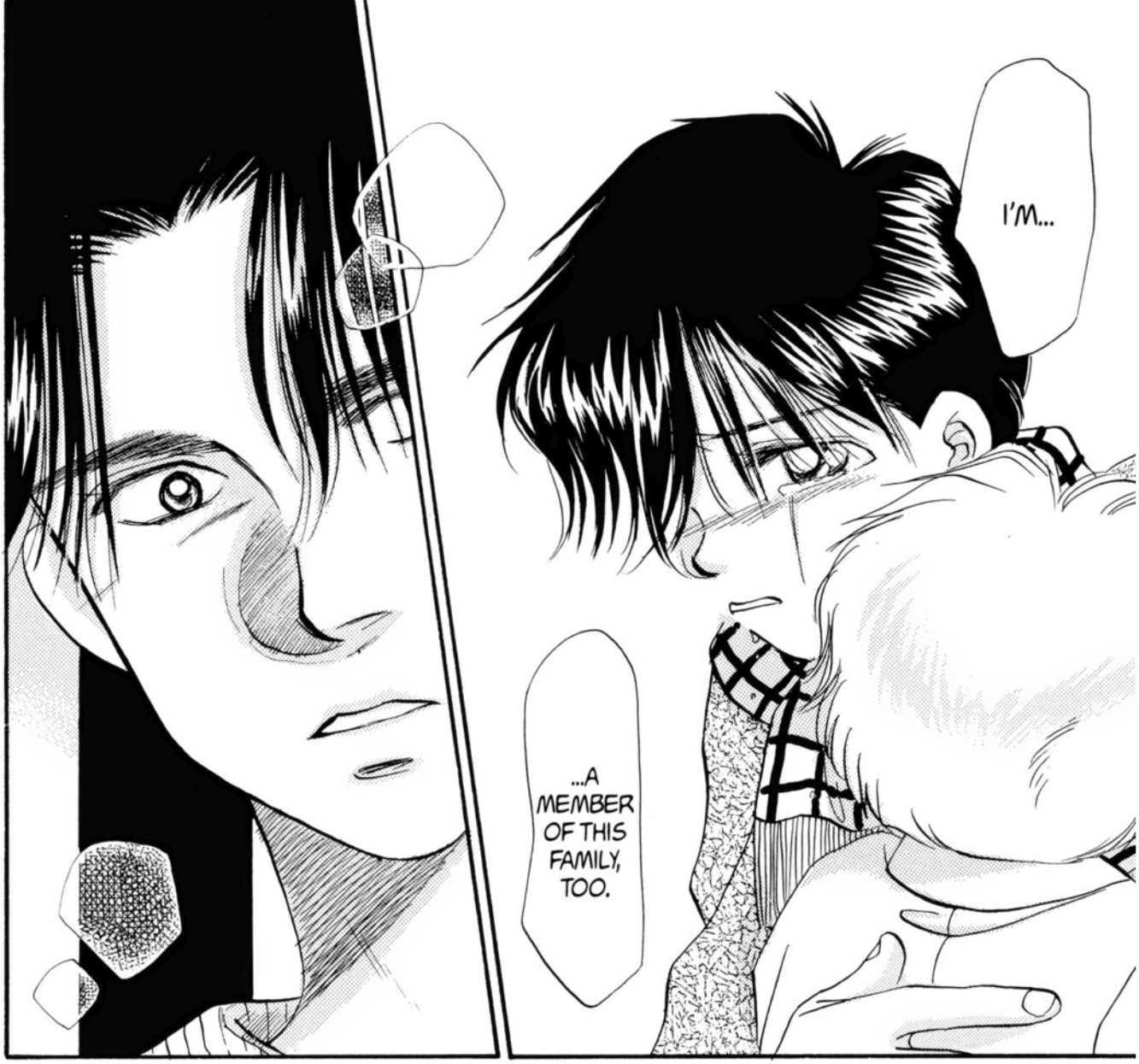
GO BACK TO SCHOOL.
NO.

...
BUT YOU'RE EXHAUSTED, DAD.

I...

KIDS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THINGS LIKE THIS!!

TAKUYA.
...
GRAB
HIC
HIC
KREEK...
...
WHY DO YOU HAVE TO DO IT ALL YOURSELF, DAD?
...?
WHY?
...I'M...
AFTER ALL...


I'M...
...A MEMBER OF THIS FAMILY, TOO.

...KIDS CAN BE PRETTY SENSIBLE.
PARENTS ARE SUCH FOOLS.

AT TIMES LIKE THESE ...

...
SOB
SOB

FWUMP

THEY DON'T REALIZE THAT THEY NEED HELP.
SWUP...

THEY THINK THEY CAN DO EVERY-THING THEM-SELVES.
SHOO

TA...
TAKUYA...
YEAH?!

DAD?!
OH! DADDY!

I'M SLEEPY ...
TAKE CARE...OF MINORU... PLEASE...
HUH?!

DAD!!
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
OHH...

Chapter 44/The End

Marimo Ragawa's
Let Me Draw What I Want
Akihiro Fujii's eyes have gradually gotten bigger.
It's such a beautiful day out that it seems like a waste to be inside drawing pictures.
TMP
Atten-shun!
On April 26, my assistants and I went to see Schindler's List and The Good Son. Oscar Schindler was quite a man. I cried.
I like Ichika. I don't usually like to draw my own characters for fun, so it's rather unusual that I feel that way about her.
Macaulay Culkin was so hateful. I mean the character he played.
According to my readers, Takuya is a good and gentle boy.
PHEW
Good boys don't really excite me, but I do like gentle boys.
Harumi has become more popular lately. I used to think that guys in their 30s were old, but now I think they're manly. That's about the age that they begin to get sexy.

Marimo Ragawa's Let Me Draw What I Want

If you're wondering what this is, it's a postscript. (So was the previous page.) When I was in high school, I enjoyed classical literature and the Chinese classics. I never thought they were difficult. On the contrary, when it came to Chinese poetry, I could read a poem once and have it memorized. Sometimes I thought I must've lived in China in a past life!! But that's silly. Now I can't remember any of the Chinese poems I learned back then.

In those days, I attempted to read *The Tale of Genji*, but it was exhausting. I tossed the book aside very quickly.

All the characters I draw have round faces, don't they? I have a round face, too. Why don't you finish the drawings in pen, you ask? It's too much trouble. Anyway, aren't they more charming like this? Ha ha ha!

Why is he putting on such airs?

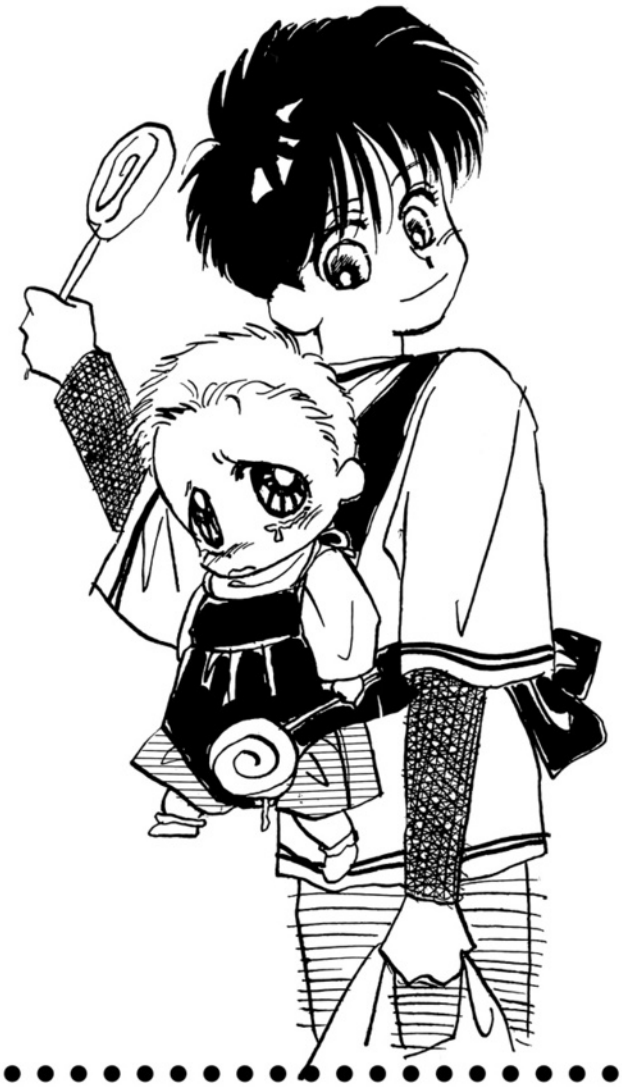
What does the ceremonial robe of a court lady look like, anyway?

See you again in Volume 9!

Yoshizo

99.4.29

Ragawa Marimo (autograph)



BABY & ME

Creator: Marimo Ragawa

SBM Title: *Baby & Me*

Date of Birth: September 21

Blood Type: B

Major Works: *Time Limit*, *Baby & Me*, *N.Y. N.Y.*, and *Shanimuni-Go* (Desperately—Go)

Marimo Ragawa first started submitting manga to a comic magazine when she was 12 years old. She kept up her submissions for four years, but to no avail. She decided to submit her work to the magazine *Hana to Yume*, where she received Top Prize in the Monthly Manga Contest as well as an honorable mention (Kasaku) in the magazine's Big Challenge contest. Her first manga was titled *Time Limit*. *Baby & Me* was honored with a Shogakukan Manga Award in 1995 and was spun off into an anime.

Ragawa's work showcases some very cute and expressive line work along with an incredible ability to depict complex emotions and relationships. Some of her other works include *N.Y. N.Y.* and the tennis manga *Shanimuni-Go*.

Ragawa has two brothers and two sisters.

BABY & ME, Vol. 8
The Shojo Beat Manga Edition

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